EXECUTIVE COACHING AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERS: AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION
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JULIE S. HENDERSON
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APPROVED:
___________________________
Charles Maher, Psy.D.
___________________________
Cary Cherniss, Ph.D.
___________________________
Jeff Graber, Ed.D.
DEAN: _______________________
Stanley Messer, Ph.D.
ABSTRACT

The practice of executive coaching has expanded over the past two decades. Business leaders from many industries have benefited from this form of professional development. The field of education, however, has not kept pace with the business world with respect to the application of executive coaching. A service similar to executive coaching in the business world is not widely available to educational leaders. Coaching and other personalized development opportunities for school leaders stand in contrast to traditional “one-shot” professional development activities such as workshops or trainings. Reviews of professional development literatures have suggested that, for leaders in education, contemporary job demands are increasingly more complex, which can tax their personal resources and limit their development through customary venues. Recent practice suggests development for school leaders is becoming more personalized, but these new opportunities can be provided in many different ways and through many different arrangements. The current exploration attempted to understand whether executive coaching may have benefits for school leaders as a professional development service. An online survey was made available to principals and supervisors in New Jersey. The educational leaders who responded appeared to welcome the prospect of a more personalized development opportunity. They believed that coaching may have value, but also expressed some logistical concerns.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Abstract

The purpose of this investigation is to determine the potential benefit of applying executive coaching methods developed in the business field to the field of education. This chapter describes the relevance of such an investigation in light of the changing definition of professional development for school leaders and the success of business applications of executive coaching. The rationale for using “leadership” rather than “executive” coaching with this audience is clarified and an overview of the present methods provided.

Introduction

Since the 1980s, the practice of executive coaching has expanded and is now broadly practiced across many fields (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Leaders in the business world have benefitted from executive coaching for almost three decades. At present, however, a relationship between the fields of education and executive coaching seems to be nonexistent. The goal of this dissertation is thus to review how the term “coaching” has been defined in business practice and used in the field of education, and to understand school leaders’ perspectives on different areas of coaching as a personalized professional development activity. To this end, the present study offers an
exploratory survey of the opinions of school leaders about executive coaching.¹

Ultimately, this investigation identifies aspects of executive coaching practice that might benefit school leaders to varying degrees. The results clarify directions for future research in and practice of executive coaching that may suit the professional development needs of leaders in education.

This study explores the potential for a relationship between educational leaders and executive coaching. Given that the organizational context differs significantly between business and educational organizations, caution must be taken when attempting to make such a transposition. Although definitions vary, executive coaching typically consists of a one-on-one partnership between a high-ranking leader and a coach for the purpose of improving the leader’s performance in his or her organizational context. Few executive coaching models embrace complex organizational theories (Joo, 2005), even though efforts to alter leadership practices have the potential to affect an entire organization. Issues of power, authority, management, group boundaries, resource allocation, and informal systems are influential in all organizations, including schools. Therefore, theories of organization are employed in order to determine the appropriateness of translating a business-oriented model to educational contexts.

The relevance of investigating a connection between executive coaching and the practice of school leadership is clear after reviewing the current professional development opportunities available to educational leaders. These traditional professional development activities commonly consist of one-day workshops or in-service trainings,

¹ For the purposes of this investigation, the terms “educational leaders,” “school leaders,” “school administrators,” and “education leaders” all refer to the same group of individuals: building or district leaders, supervisors, directors, or coordinators.
and very few involve post-training follow up to increase the transfer of learning (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005). Opportunities are available from a variety of sources including national associations, state associations, university and higher education institutes, comprehensive school reform programs, state departments of education, regional laboratories, district leadership academies, and independent consultants (Peterson, 2002). The large quantity of diverse opportunities available from multiple sources has the potential to be beneficial for leaders. Yet drawing on such a wide array of development options is also likely to create a fragmented professional learning experience for school leaders (Peterson, 2002). The limited degree of coherence with which one opportunity is linked to the next makes it more difficult for leaders to apply new knowledge and improve job performance.

Researchers in educational leadership have begun to recognize the importance of job-embedded, ongoing, and seamless professional development given the contemporary understanding of educational leadership (Peterson, 2002). Some claim that responsibilities central to effective leadership performance may vary from one school context to another and that school leaders will require different types of on-the-job professional learning in diverse localized school settings (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005). Preparing all principals in the same traditional way is no longer expected to produce equally high performance. After administrative preparation programs, the extent to which the school leader’s role is important in leading change or sustaining successful performance partially determines the appropriate type of professional development activity. Qualities of the state departments of education, the state- and district-mandated programs and initiatives in place, the local community, the
local economy, and the students’ cultural background and grade level can define educational leaders’ professional development needs once they actually take on a leadership role. The centrality of local variables therefore means that educational leaders will need to develop different administrative competencies to varying degrees.

In contrast to most traditional professional development, *personalized* development options such as induction mentoring or peer collaboration provide longer-term opportunities tailored to each leader’s individual needs. Some personalized development options are gaining popularity, especially among teacher populations, but personalized options are conspicuously absent in comprehensive reviews of professional development options for educational leaders, particularly well-defined coaching. Much of the professional learning in schools has focused on developing teachers, partly because they are closer to the classroom and are the more obvious vehicles for improving student academic achievement. Principals have unfortunately received much less attention in their role as leaders of instruction and managers of people. Despite coaching’s success in assisting teachers with the practice of professional educating (Knight, 2009), it has not yet advanced in assisting school administrators with the practice of professional leadership. In light of research that stresses the importance of less generic and more context-specific leadership development for school leaders, the leadership coaching engagement may be a valuable, new, personalized type of professional development for educational leaders.
Overview of the Current Investigation

Professional development models generated within the for-profit sector may not directly translate into educational settings in the non-profit sector, given the differences in their internal values and their social purpose. However, the opposite argument—that a service developed to benefit business leaders is unable to contribute to the practice of educational leadership—cannot be assumed either. This investigation aims to understand better how executive coaching might benefit professionals in the field of educational leadership. Reviews of relevant research and practice are combined with qualitative and quantitative data concerning the opinions of educational leaders on executive coaching.

This study begins with a review of the executive coaching literature in business and the personalized professional development literature (including “coaching”) in education. The important role of the organizational context is elucidated, and some organizational similarities and differences between schools and businesses are presented. Next, sample development programs for educators demonstrate how the term “coaching” has been applied in educational organizations. Then, the method of investigation utilizing an exploratory survey of education leaders regarding professional development, personal behaviors, and coaching is described. The respondents’ opinions about unique elements and major components of executive coaching (presented in a definition of “leadership coaching”) are summarized. Results of the survey are discussed in light of relevant literature on coaching in general and specifically in the context of education. Any areas of broad agreement, notable resistance, or great concern in their reactions are discussed. Finally, this study offers recommendations for research and practice, which take into account the opinions of educational leaders regarding the applicability of leadership
coaching as well as currently available opportunities for professional development. These implications may help spur future research and the practice of a new form of more personalized professional development for leaders in educational organizations.

Executive or Leadership Coaching?

Respect for the uniqueness of the education system warrants a cautious approach to an exploration of executive coaching methods as a more contextual and potentially beneficial approach to professional development for educational leaders. Executive coaching has been developed for business settings where “executives” hold top ranking rather than “instructional leaders.” Terms and phrases like administrator, educational leader, instructional leader, educator, principal, supervisor, director and superintendent are all used to describe those who hold district- and school-level leadership positions in education. Most school leaders are not identified as “executives” in their profession, but “leader” is a term that applies to all of the above. In identifying the model, the term executive was exchanged for leadership in an attempt to limit initial biases against the coaching model. The ultimate goal is to better understand how executive coaching developed for leaders in the private sector might benefit leaders in public education. Referring to the opportunity as leadership coaching broached the subject using more relatable terminology to reduce immediate bias against the topic, but preserved the integrity of the underlying development model.

Summary

The purpose of the current investigation is to better understand how educational leaders perceive executive coaching methods as potentially valuable to their work in
schools. This introductory chapter presented a context for the exploratory study and a brief summary of the current methods of investigation. Terminology was clarified, including the definition of “personalized professional development” in contrast to traditional professional development, and the use of “leadership coaching” in lieu of executive coaching for this population of educational leaders.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Abstract

Executive coaching research and practice in business will be compared to the application of personalized professional development methods in education. Although both fields are relatively underdeveloped, business literature has advanced further and can inform some of the terminological confusion in the field of education. The importance of organizational context will be emphasized, along with details about the systemic and developmental contexts relevant to translating executive coaching methods from business to education.

Executive Coaching

Executive coaching is a personalized form of professional development that has been recognized in the business literature since the 1980s, and its popularity increased during the early 1990s (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Demand for coaching services continues to grow today, although a single definition of the practice remains nonexistent and empirical support for the investment remains weak (Stewart, O’Riordan & Palmer, 2008). Unfortunately, the empirical literature supporting executive coaching frameworks has not kept pace with practitioners who designate their services “coaching.” Only more recently have researchers taken an interest in examining the definition and evaluating executive coaching practice that has spread across multiple professions (Joo,
2005). Standards for practice have only recently begun to emerge as researchers attempt to identify commonalities among models, evaluate the effectiveness of coaching work, and establish professional organizations.²

Before embarking on an analysis of executive coaching, some basic definitional consistency must first be established. Based on extensive reviews of literature and practice, executive coaching can be defined as a one-on-one relationship between a professional coach and an executive for purposes that include improving behavior, encouraging development, and increasing effectiveness (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Joo, 2005; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Conceptualizations of executive coaching practice also concur that coaching is an engagement in which both parties are active participants. Stober & Grant (2006), in a very broad review of the literature, attempted to define executive coaching and identified some premises common to contemporary coaching models. In short, they considered coaching to be “a systematic process directed at fostering ongoing self-directed learning and personal growth,” and conclude that “coaching is more about asking the right questions than telling people what to do, …not necessarily concerned with subject-matter expertise or advice giving” (p. 3). In contrast to other professional development services, executive coaching can be uniquely characterized by the following premises:

- Relationship is collaborative and egalitarian rather than authoritarian
- Focus is on the goal attainment processes rather than on analyzing problems
- Emphasis is on collaborative goal setting

² Various organizing bodies founded in the recent past claim to have authority to certify students of the coaching profession (including International Coaching Federation, coaching schools, Graduate School Alliance for Executive Coaching), but each advocates for different coaching methods and holds different standards of professional practice.
- It is assumed that clients do not have clinically significant mental health problems
- Coaches do not need high levels of domain-specific expertise

A number of writers have identified other important aspects of coaching processes and methods. In addition to common premises, there are procedural commonalities found among executive coaching models. Across the literature, the general steps involved in a coaching engagement appear to be consistent: relationship building, assessment, feedback, intervention, and evaluation (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). Coaching is only one part of the intervention portion of the process. (See Appendix A for a detailed description of an executive coaching engagement from entry to termination.) Common data collection tools and procedures applied across many executive coaching models include psychometric evaluations, personality assessments and multi-rater feedback (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001), or data from those who work closely with the leader. In the present study, the practice of coaching is defined as a professional partnership between a leader and a coach for the purposes of improving the leader’s performance and managing work-related issues.

Models of Executive Coaching

Definitions of executive coaching vary with regard to the theories that inform their methods and the extent of their reliance on those theories. Although coaching seems to be universally considered a change process, practitioners and researchers in different fields continue to express competing notions of appropriate methods. Executive coaching services are often conceptualized as a combination of management, consulting, and psychology practices, and are rooted in early organization development work (Joo, 2005). Peer-reviewed literature in the field of psychology has most frequently attempted to stake
a claim to executive coaching (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Psychological theories inform many aspects of the coaching process, such as the conceptualization of progress, the manner in which goals are determined, the appropriate boundaries of the coach-coachee relationship, and the content of coaching sessions. Some popular executive coaching methods based on psychological theory include humanistic/person-centered, behavioral, developmental, cognitive, psychodynamic, solution-focused, systems, experiential, integrative, and multidimensional (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Olson, 2008; Orenstein, 2007; Passmore, 2007; Stober & Grant, 2006).

A major difference between coaching models lies in the degree to which they embrace a theoretical basis or rely on pop psychology themes (Grant & Stober, 2006; Stewart, O’Riordan & Palmer, 2008). Theoretically grounded approaches, such as those listed above, refer to one or more established psychological theories in their approach: a characteristic missing from practitioner-derived models based solely on repetitive practice or pop psychology themes of self-help.³ Atheoretical models, in contrast, evolve from practice rather than rigorous theories and are often unexamined in peer-reviewed publications. Stewart, O’Riordan & Palmer (2008) note that some models developed from the practice of coaching may rely too heavily on practitioner observation and experience and lack an objective research perspective. However, a reliance on theory to develop coaching models risks overlooking complexities only evident in the practical application of coaching. In the following sections, different approaches to executive coaching will be explicated on the basis of their theoretical frameworks.

³ The importance of psychology in explaining a coaching model and thus a coach’s process has led some practitioners and researchers to identify their work as a separate subdiscipline called “coaching psychology” (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Stewart, O’Riordan & Palmer, 2008).
Humanistic approaches (Stober, 2006) emphasize human growth and self-actualization in their reliance on the client-centered theory of Carl Rogers (1957/1992). Within humanistic models, a coach provides the conditions necessary for personal growth, and the coach is an active learner who asks nondirective questions. Humanistic approaches to coaching seek to respect the whole, unique individual, but may be less measurable and underemphasize other variables in the change process. Cognitive-behavioral approaches to coaching, on the other hand, emphasize the connection of external behaviors to internal cognitions (Auerbach, 2006; Ducharme, 2004). Many cognitive-behavioral approaches examine underlying patterns of thinking and associated behaviors in an attempt to uncover hidden assumptions that precede typical actions. This approach is particularly appropriate for issue-driven, problem-focused difficulties in which an explicit behavioral change process is the primary desire. This process can more visibly demonstrate progress, which is especially amenable to measurement. However, focusing exclusively on behavioral change may overlook the importance of providing conditions for the growth of the whole person, as in humanistic approaches; and like humanistic approaches, they may underemphasize other variables in the change process.

Some theorists attempt to account for the complexity of coaching practice in more holistic (integrative or meta-) models of executive coaching (Cavanagh, 2006; Orenstein, 2007; Passmore, 2007). Combining multiple theoretical frameworks (such as humanistic and behavioral) in a single model brings together diverse practices to more broadly account for complex, interrelated variables at work in executive coaching practice. The result is a more all-inclusive perspective on the practice of executive coaching. The integrative model (Passmore, 2007) combines humanistic, cognitive-behavioral,
psychodynamic, emotional intelligence, and organizational culture theories and traditions. In a complex systemic model of coaching, Cavanagh (2006) combines systems theory, chaos theory, complexity theory, and offers the metaphor of organizations engaging in conversation as a way to understand the coaching process. The multidimensional model of executive coaching incorporates multiple organizational theories, including role theories, psychodynamic theories, and embedded intergroup relations theory (EIRT) in its methods and design (Orenstein, 2002). This meta-model considers individual, group, and organizational variables, the coach’s internal processes, and the organization’s effects on the coach, coachee, and their work together (Orenstein, 2007).

These complex models have drawbacks, however. While more holistic models are grounded in multiple theories, they are more difficult to evaluate and more challenging for most coaches to apply in comparison to single-theory models. Additionally, expanding the methodological approach of executive coaching makes it more complicated to test the effectiveness of meta-models empirically. Coaches utilizing these multifaceted models require much more training to master the complex approach. Additionally, in practice, integrating multiple theoretical approaches may oversimplify some of the intricate theoretical and methodological differences of each individual model and framework of coaching. More complex models for executive coaching may have a decreased ability to account for the dynamic relationships and contextual factors that vary in unique, real-life applications of coaching.
Other Personalized Professional Development Services

There are important differences between the practice of executive coaching services and other types of personalized professional development services, such as mentoring, consulting, and counseling (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Joo, 2005; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Palmer, 2003). Personal development services share some attributes in common; they are typically relationship-based and focus on behavioral change and learning. Often, their purpose is to change behaviors and improve the performance of an individual leader so he or she functions optimally. However, these personalized models differ most perceptibly in their general purpose and the background of the service provider.

Mentoring is generally people-focused, and its purpose can vary from socialization to management development (Joo, 2005). Mentoring can be more or less formalized in its origination, and length of the service can vary indefinitely, particularly if mentoring relationships begin informally. Mentoring services are usually provided by an experienced, sometimes retired, domain-specific professional who holds a higher organizational position than the mentee. As a role model, the mentor’s industry experience and insight most appropriately addresses practical learning needs of those less experienced in the field (Palmer, 2003). Coaching, on the other hand, is time-bound, provided by professionals external to the organization, and is intended to meet nonspecific leadership needs shared across multiple industries.

Consultation with a counselor is often better suited for cases in which there is a need or desire to analyze the root causes of patterns or problems. The primary purpose of a counseling relationship may be to remediate ineffectual patterns of behavior. Kampa-
Kokesch & Anderson (2001) reported that coaching is less inclined to pursue or process issues as deeply as therapy does. Counseling typically originates in the personal realm, when a person decides to pursue treatment for a private need, while coaching originates in the organizational setting. Although coaching might acknowledge the importance of personal history, a leader’s global behavioral patterns are not the primary focus of development efforts in the way they might be during counseling.

Technical consulting or advising provides business leaders with assistance for solving technical problems. A consultant may research a specific problem and use functional expertise to intervene or provide explicit recommendations for resolving issues. In contrast to the problem-solving approach of technical consultants, a coach encourages leaders to engage in alternative ways of thinking about issues on their own. Similar to mentors, technical advisers use domain-specific business acumen to assist leaders in planning or executing particular business actions (Feldman & Lankau, 2005), while coaches apply a broader range of specialization that is relevant across business contexts. Any organizational member may request the services of technical consultants, whereas high-ranking leaders may need to demonstrate personal motivation to improve in order to initiate a coaching process with an executive coach (Palmer, 2003).

Personalized Professional Development in Education

While not entirely clear in practice, the theoretical distinction between executive coaching and other personalized professional development in the private sector is gaining clarity in business literature. The same cannot be said of education literature, where personalized professional development services are conflated and commonly mislabeled
both in research and practice. This section will look generally at personalized professional development in the context of education literature and specific examples in which coaching is practiced in education.

In the field of education, personalized interventions apply to different levels, personalized service providers fill different roles, and the primary purpose of personalized development fluctuates, fueling confusion about the concept of coaching in education. There are multiple levels of intervention in education: teachers, educational leaders, and teams have all been audiences for personalized professional development. At each level of intervention, the term “coaching” has been defined as a process, method, technique, skill, program, or training. There is also disagreement over the role of personalized service providers in education. “Coaches” have distinct goals, methods, and relationships to coachees. Moreover, the overall purpose and intended outcomes of development services varies by setting and provider.

The executive coaching literature summarized above may provide some clarity. In a recent review of coaching practices in both business and education literatures, researchers found that the business world has far surpassed the field of education in understanding effective coaching practice, and that business practices informed many of the current coaching practices in education (Brown, Stroh, Fouts & Baker, 2005). The most prevalent types of coaching practice in education are described and clarified below.

*Coaching for Teachers*

Personalized “coaching” interventions are most commonly available to classroom teachers in the form of instructional, classroom management, technical, reciprocal, collegial, challenge, peer, content-focused, blended, and cognitive coaching (Denton &
Peer coaching, perhaps the oldest form of coaching in education, is the primary type found in educational literature (Brown, Stroh, Fouts & Baker, 2005; Wong & Nicotera, 2003). Peer coaching increases interaction among educators, as it frequently includes collaborative planning, observation, and feedback. Since the 1980s, researchers have suggested that schools encourage teachers to work collaboratively, discuss effective practices, improve instructional techniques, and increase accurate curriculum implementation (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Reviews of peer collaboration also suggest the practice has begun to facilitate a more collegial culture and transform teaching into a less isolated profession (Britton & Anderson, 2010; Lu, 2010; Wong & Nicotera, 2003).

Similar to executive coaching in the private sector, models of personalized services for teachers vary by context. Similar to peer coaching, instructional coaching is another popular permutation of coaching in which expert teachers work with other teachers in a school or district to improve instructional practices (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Knight, 2009). These instructional coaches are technical consultants with domain-specific expertise in particular curricula or learning styles. They use observation, demonstration, and feedback to help recently trained teachers implement new programs or curricula in their own classrooms. This service has improved the fidelity of educators’ post-training classroom implementation, which is intended to improve student achievement.

**Personalized Professional Development for Education Leaders**

New teacher development programs rooted in partnership abound, while the same type of personal support at the principal level is much more limited (Bloom, Castagna &
Warren, 2003; Bossi, 2008). The inherently isolated nature of educational leadership and imprecise conceptions of the school leader’s role may make it difficult to directly translate personalized professional development models from teachers to leaders (Portin, Alejano, Knapp & Marzolf, 2006). A study of school leadership preparation practices by the Wallace Foundation (2008) confirms that personalized professional support for those at the principal level is exceedingly rare in practice, particularly formalized in-service mentoring or coaching services. Nevertheless, the growing consensus seems to be that “leadership training should not end when principals are hired. It should continue... with professional development for all principals to promote career-long growth in line with the evolving needs of schools and districts” (Wallace Foundation, 2008, p. 7). Personalized professional development methods like coaching and mentoring are beginning to gain popularity, and are on the rise as components in some development programs (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005; Hirsh, 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2008).

In terms of the professional development currently available in education, structured mentoring relationships intended to build instructional capacity and/or promote student achievement appear to be the most widely embraced individual “coaching” models designed specifically for school leaders (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005). In its most familiar form, mentoring involves pairing novice educators with more experienced educators in the same building or district to build the professional capacity of new educators through induction. This is similar to a common practice in the private sector wherein new employees are paired with a mentor as part of their onboarding process to become socialized quickly within a new company.
School leaders may also engage in systemic-level development like change, reform, or capacity coaching, which is a very recent advancement in the application of coaching to education (Brown, Stroh, Fouts & Baker, 2005; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). Rather than a personalized approach for school leaders, this group- or system-level intervention often targets teams at the school, district, or state levels with the purpose of “build[ing] capacity within the system leading to a new professional environment in which the leadership causes change, including instructional improvement” (Brown, Stroh, Fouts & Baker, 2005, p. 2). Capacity coaching attempts to increase school leaders’ ability and deepen their commitment to improving instructional leadership practices that will support a school’s ability to institute systemic reform efforts. Attention to the school leader’s responsibilities to use data, organize resources, and observe teachers effectively are combined with attention to the capacity of the group (leader and teachers together) to work collaboratively.

*Types of Providers*

Another way to understand the multiple versions of personalized professional development in education is to distinguish between options by the type of provider. Some service providers are considered experts, while others are considered equals. Expert service providers possess specific content-area knowledge that helps educators improve their professional practice. They are experienced educators or consultants who possess more power in the coaching relationship because of their extensive specialized experience. In mentoring relationships, seasoned professionals can expedite a new employee’s integration into a company or field of practice by drawing on their experience and functional knowledge. Peer collaboration or coaching implies a more equal
relationship between two professionals in which both parties are intended to benefit mutually and the line between provider and client is less clear.

Examples of both expert and peer coaching relationships are again visible at multiple levels in education: in the classroom, school, and district. Instructional coaches with expertise in mathematics or literacy, for example, assist teachers with instruction of particular subjects. Instructional coaches are often former teachers who stay abreast of current research on effective instruction. Like mentors, instructional coaches are expert providers who possess domain-specific expertise. At the leadership level, experienced or retired educational leaders can serve as mentors for current education leaders. At the school or district level, a capacity coach’s specific responsibilities can include assisting with “problem identification and…instructional design plans based on research-based best practices” (Brown, Stroh, Fouts & Baker, 2005, p. 29). This suggests that similar to mentors and instructional coaches, capacity coaches possess an expertise that places them in a technical support role.

A closer look at the purpose behind and providers of development services in education suggests clearer language established in empirical business literature can help differentiate between applications of personalized professional development for educators (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Joo, 2005; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Palmer, 2003). In sum, many models are better described as “mentoring models” in cases in which the provider possesses educational experience. Development models may be better described as peer collaboration in cases in which groups meet together, or no additional requisite skills are necessary for the provider to practice. In addition, providers are better described as technical consultants when they possess instructional expertise or their
purpose is to develop instructional skills or solve problems. To bring these statements to life, the next section will present select examples in which “coaching” terminology has been applied to professional development for school leaders. Although quite rare overall, these examples will illustrate some of the inconsistencies in practice.

Sample “Coaching” Applications for School Leaders

Compared to the business world today, where multiple executive coaching models exist for business leaders (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001), education leaders have considerably fewer options. Even within the field of education, education leaders are limited in their personalized professional development options, in comparison with teachers. Although relatively rare and not well evaluated in peer-reviewed publications, however, a few personalized development programs designed specifically for school leaders have emerged across the country during the last decade. The following review of four professional development programs demonstrates some of the ways “coaching” has been applied to personalized development for school leaders as a way to elucidate the extent of variation and reveal potential areas of clarification. These programs focus on a primarily interpersonal context for professional development, yet they differ in important ways. One model brings together peers to coach each other and weakly employs the notion of an external facilitator, leaving their explicit role in the change process undefined. At least two models substitute mentoring relationships for leadership coaching. The final example attempts a holistic approach to developing school leaders, but it limits coaching to a single component in a larger program. Differences and areas of confusion evident in these personalized development models will be discussed in light of the executive coaching literature reviewed above.
Peer consultation as coaching. Popularized in *Coaching Educational Leadership* (2005), Robertson’s professional development process utilizes peer and external service providers to facilitate goal setting and achievement for two or more school leaders. The process begins with interested school leaders seeking out other leaders (one or more) to engage in a mutually-beneficial partnership. “Coaching” partners are expected to engage with each other through nonjudgmental participation and with confidentiality. Before and during interpersonal sessions, participating school leaders spend time learning important skills such as active listening, reflective interviewing, self-assessment, and goal setting; and how to develop action plans, set time frames, observe and describe practice, and give effective feedback. These skills can be developed individually or in a workshop session using exercises provided in Robertson’s book. Self-identified development goals are set early in the process; Robertson recommends that they address more than one “area of work,” such as research, community service, or curriculum responsibilities (p. 112).

Robertson’s coaching model is based on principles of effective teacher development, a belief in lifelong learning, and a commitment to improving student achievement. Robertson recommends that school leaders working with their peer(s) also involve a third party: a facilitator who can fill myriad roles during the coaching process such as motivator, demonstrator, pace-setter, reminder, consultant, resource investigator, group dynamics advisor, and scribe. Sufficiently qualified external facilitators include those who have experienced the process of coaching, understand learning and leadership theory, and are conversant with the change process. Robertson considers the facilitator role even more important in cases where the model involves group development processes, such as the pairing of two leaders from different professional contexts or three
or more school leaders from any context. Facilitators are viewed as valuable assets because they provide partners with an outside perspective that makes it possible to elevate the “learning relationship between coaching partners to higher levels of critical thought and dialogue” (p. 138).

What Robertson calls coaching for educational leadership might be better classified as a model of peer or even external leadership coaching. The primary leader-to-leader developmental partnership is equal; sharing an interest and willingness to help is all that is required for school leaders to participate and provide development services in this example. Engagement in the developmental process requires learning and practicing new skills that might be redundant, given the diverse skills expected of the external facilitator, who essentially coaches the coaching process. In their broadly defined role, external facilitators are expected to assist the developing leaders in the acquisition of these new skills as well as being skilled masters themselves. The addition of an external facilitator professionalized this otherwise equivalent relationship by bringing structure, formality, theory, accountability, and goal-orientation to the development process. However, the external facilitators’ broadly defined role left little room for the leaders’ active participation in their own development. In addition, the only expertise not required of the facilitator was practical experience in educational leadership, which would support conversations between equal partners based on personal experiences.

Models of peer coaching take advantage of the benefits that educational leaders can offer each other. Collaborating with another educational leader experiencing similar struggles has the potential to improve creativity and expand technical skill. Indeed, reciprocal teacher relationships have been shown to promote a culture of collaboration
and professionalism and improve the implementation of new instructional techniques and curricula.

Yet, while peer coaching models for teachers may add value, practical problems have prevented the flawless implementation of some programs (Lu, 2010). Some difficulties encountered while implementing peer coaching programs among teachers include the lower quality of feedback and the limited observation skills of teachers (Britton & Anderson, 2010). If building technical capacities and/or creating a collaborative community are the only professional development goals for leaders, personalized peer models such as Robertson’s (2005) may be sufficient. If the goal is to fulfill a more general purpose outside these collaborative, functional parameters, development models could benefit from the presence of a different type of professional service provider.

*Mentoring as coaching.* In some cases, development programs conflate mentoring and coaching in their utilization of experienced educators for the broadly-defined purpose of developing current educators. This is particularly the case when educational leaders are paired with retired or more experienced educational leaders. Two examples will be provided and critiqued below: a program offered by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and the Program for New Principals (PNP). In the program developed by the ACSA, site administrators (principals, vice principals, coordinators) of any experience level in the state of California could elect to receive on-site “leadership coaching” for two years from former educational leaders trained in popularized, blended coaching methods. Development work consisted of three to six hours of sessions per month, along with phone and email communication between sessions as needed. Blended
coaching was “built around the particular needs of school leaders” (Bloom, Castagna & Warren, 2003, p. 21), and strictly adhered to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders (CCSSO, 2008) in its goal-setting and assessment processes. A representative from ACSA has similarly defined this model of leadership coaching as “an individualized, situational, goal-oriented, professional relationship focused upon the development of leadership” (Bossi, 2008, p. 34) and specified that the model’s purpose was to achieve student success. The development process may involve multi-rater feedback, guided reflection, observations, and progress evaluations twice a year. Providers were qualified as experienced school leaders trained in particular coaching techniques, who demonstrated “a propensity toward coaching and professional development” (Bossi, 2008, p. 34). The provider asked difficult questions, promoted reflection, and occasionally revealed hidden patterns of behavior to the coachee. ACSA recommended the development relationship be non-evaluative, grounded in trust, and protected by confidentiality.

The ACSA program advertised to districts that it developed leadership behaviors most closely associated with student achievement, but in actuality, under their “new orientation” toward educational leadership, primary activities targeted the “wide-ranging, problematic, and often deeply personal issues” that educational leaders of today face as developers of people (Bossi, 2009, p. 21). Operating within the blended coaching framework, ACSA service providers were instructed to apply both “instructional” and “facilitative” strategies (Bloom, Castagna, Moir & Warren, 2005). Instructional strategies required the provider to be an expert consultant, collaborator, and teacher on matters of technical import to educational leaders. Facilitative strategies required the provider to be
a mediator capable of supporting meta-cognition and reflection. Additional capacities included addressing “personal” issues such as communication style, stress management, emotional intelligence, and cultural proficiency. In addition to consulting on instruction and learning topics, ACSA providers could scrutinize relationships, communication skills, public reactions, inner biases, values, and priorities, to help leaders develop “positive productive behavior that contributes to effective professional relationships” (ACSA/NTC, 2010).

Much of the ACSA leadership coaching model used components of the blended coaching model (Bloom, Castagna, Moir & Warren, 2005), which followed practices (360° feedback) and asserted values (confidential, non-evaluative, nonjudgmental) that are aligned with some models of executive coaching. While the blended coaching model suggests that the most effective coaches are generally outside professional experts whose primary work is leadership coaching, the ACSA identified as coaches former, successful school leaders who were “by nature” less prone to judge and more apt to focus on growth. ACSA designers admitted that “there are almost always a few war stories threaded into the experience” (Bossi, 2008, p. 34) such that internal service providers often drew on their personal histories to frame suggestions for current leaders.

A major study of professional development research concludes that “quality remains a challenge for many of the new mentoring programs, particularly because the selection and training of the mentors is often weak” (Wallace Foundation, 2008, p. 8). Mentors responsible for addressing too many diverse problems outside the scope of their preparation as educational leaders may not be equipped to remedy the non-instructional issues of leadership practice common to all professional settings. Some researchers in
education agree with findings in the business literature: “although successful practitioners themselves… mentors may not possess the tools or the skills that it takes to be most effective in providing individual support” to first-year principals (Bloom, Castagna & Warren, 2003). These researchers conclude that novice principals ought to have the support of a mentor in addition to a coach.

In another application of the popular blended coaching framework, the university-based Program for New Principals (PNP) provided three years of personalized “leadership coaching” to early-career educational leaders as an extension of their administrative preparation program. Again, professional development work consisted of three to six hours of interpersonal services per month, along with phone and email communication between meetings as needed. One of PNP’s primary goals was to provide induction support for the new leaders as they became more comfortable in their new roles. Recent graduates were matched with service providers who were experienced or retired educational leaders trained in blended coaching techniques, like the providers in the ACSA example above. Intending to take advantage of similarities between the service provider’s experience and the new leader’s instructional challenge, this development program matched pairs that shared a history at the same school level and/or with a similar leadership challenge. Service providers first assisted new leaders with their schedule, budget, staffing processes, and the development of an initial entry plan. Instructional challenges such as improving classroom instruction were addressed after administrative matters. Providers often shared examples from their experience and pinpointed specific practices in which they felt the leader was weakest. Service providers expressed that they enjoyed “the opportunity to mentor a beginning principal [as] a unique opportunity to
give back to the profession and pass on knowledge gained through years of experience” (Silver, Lochmiller, Copland & Tripps, 2009, p. 230).

A recent qualitative study examining the experiences of leaders, providers, and site supervisors engaged with PNP found that the perceived unique value of this model beyond other forms of traditional professional development was that it was personalized, flexible, and differentiated (Silver, Lochmiller, Copland & Tripps, 2009)—characteristics commonly shared by many forms of personalized professional development. Researchers found that some coaching pairs achieved more limited success than others, which they attributed to an inappropriate match between school leaders of diverse levels of experience. Experienced leaders used their own ideas to solve some instructional leadership problems, but successful development hinged on and was limited by the exactness of their shared history. When areas of need fell outside their experience, providers were hesitant or unable to provide assistance. Inexact matches therefore resulted in mentors experiencing role confusion, given that development depended upon solutions drawn from similar experiences in educational leadership.

When expert educational leaders apply techniques to guide leaders and help them solve problems, the services could be described as mentoring (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005). Yet, whether called a “mentor” or “coach,” when the personal provider and leader share a history in the same system, the scope of development can be limited by their dual relationship as colleagues and development partners. In the cases of both ACSA and PNP, personalized development services classified as “leadership coaching” for school leaders took the form of mentoring relationships, evidenced by both parties’ status as education leaders. A similarly inexact
nomenclature is evident when service providers are professional equals in models of peer coaching such as Robertson’s (2005). Even in the case of PNP, in which leaders were matched with the most similar providers in terms of career path, job-alike pairings fell short of achieving optimal results because provider abilities were not conducive to both field-specific and more general developmental outcomes.

Beyond “provid[ing] instruction, consultation, and collaboration when needed” (ACSA/NTC, n.d.), the ACSA model aimed to improve more personal aspects of job performance like building collaborative skills and effective communication. Such a goal reflects an additional conflation of mentoring and coaching purposes. Case-by-case problem-solving relationships rely on personal experience to provide a form of technical consulting in solution-focused work. Individualized mentoring and peer coaching partnerships are best suited for resolving immediate, field-specific dilemmas rather than facilitating holistic growth. In contrast to facilitating induction or improving instructional skills, the purpose of leadership coaching relationships is to promote long-term developmental growth for individuals.

**Single programmatic component as coaching.** Finally, in addition to standing in for peer and mentoring development models, “coaching” is often used as a small component of larger development models. An example can be found at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education, where developers offered a development opportunity for educational executives through a program called the Executive Leadership Program for Educators\(^4\) (ExEL, Mitgang & The Wallace Foundation, 2009). The “dual-focused” professional development framework of ExEL was based on a theory of change.

\(^4\) At the time of writing, this program was not open for yearly enrollment.
leadership that referenced multidisciplinary theories such as adult development, organization development, and adult learning (Wagner, et al., 2006). The two major goals of the development program were to increase individual leaders’ self-awareness on the job as they made decisions that altered systems, and to increase leaders’ awareness of the inherent difficulties associated with systems.

School leaders, superintendents, board members, agency heads, and their teams were encouraged to enroll in ExEL. Participating teams met for five days per summer for two consecutive years to study case examples, engage in conversation, self-examination, and role-playing, and define their own problems to solve. Participants heard representatives from successful schools or districts speak about their experience, and business case examples were embraced as learning opportunities alongside school-based examples. Much like executive coaching models, the ExEL model stressed the importance of setting SMART\textsuperscript{5} goals to track progress and increase the chances for success. Leaders first explicated their personal commitment to education. They were then encouraged to uncover their own “immunities to change” (underlying assumptions, beliefs, or mental models) that hindered progress toward realizing their commitment (Helsing, Howell, Kegan & Lahey, 2008). ExEL development goals, which were directly tied to those immunities to change, were required to be “specifically learning-related” (p. 3) and have measurable outcomes. After the intensive summer program, on-site organizational coaches met with teams for a few days of coaching during the school year.

Ultimately, ExEL encouraged operational alignment among school leadership teams in pursuit of increased student achievement. Unique program design elements

\textsuperscript{5} Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound. The SMART goal-setting framework was also mentioned in Robertson’s (2005) model.
included the study of business case examples, the use of post-training support services, and the acknowledgement of both organizational processes and individual psychological needs associated with the change process. While the follow up of on-site organizational coaches at the team level was a novel addition to this model of professional development, coaching remained only one small portion of the larger development program. Coaching services were very brief and the details of its content were omitted from program descriptions. It is possible (but unlikely) that ExEL’s coaching component was as comprehensive as some models of executive coaching. For educators, it may be more difficult to conceive of coaching as a holistic developmental practice when it is known more widely as a developmental method. This definitional discrepancy therefore adds to the confusion concerning the definition of coaching in education.

The examples from Robertson (2005), ACSA, PNP, and ExEL discussed above demonstrate a number of areas of potential confusion when the word “coaching” is applied to services for school leaders. Terminology remains relatively similar in each example, although the purposes and providers of professional development called “coaching” vary. Most notably, in practice, mentoring and peer collaboration methods are confused with leadership coaching when current or former education leaders are trained to “coach” in pursuit of solutions to problems. A major review of professional development for school leaders claims that “the primary role of the mentor is to guide the learner in his or her search for strategies to resolve dilemmas, to boost self-confidence, and to construct a broad repertoire of leadership skills” (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005, p. 10). Here again, coaching practice is mentioned as a method of mentoring, alongside other techniques such as questioning and providing
feedback. Confusion can be compounded when the purpose for the development relationship (such as “construct a broad repertoire of leadership skills”) does not align with the provider’s abilities. ACSA addresses expanding professional development needs by expecting more of their service providers rather than looking for additional expertise from different providers, and Robertson’s model addresses new types of learning by inserting an external facilitator. Broader leadership development is inappropriately expected from relationships built on solving field-specific problems with a trained education leader.

The developmental limitations of these four examples suggest the need for a broader perspective, which has begun to emerge in the case of ExEL. Although this example restricts coaching interventions to one small component of a larger development program, it cites organization and adult development theories in its theoretical framework. These approaches take a broader perspective that may be useful when applying interventions in any system.

Organizational Context

Organizational concerns are important to consider in order to responsibly implement any predefined, personalized professional development model. The psychology of change is not limited to the individual development process in which the coachee is engaged. Organizational psychology asserts that individual behavior can only be wholly understood in the context of the complex social systems from which it arose (Schein, 1965). In a more complete understanding of the organization as a complex social system comprised of interrelated groups, the individual is reframed as a concurrent
member of multiple groups. Given the dependency between organizations and individuals, facets of the organizational context may require more attention in development models from business and education.

Organizational Theories in Coaching

Holistic meta-models offer the most complex approaches to executive coaching in business. With the exception of the multidimensional executive coaching model, organizational considerations are frequently overlooked in the design of coaching processes. Passmore (2007) names the cultural context as an important consideration in the integrative model, and Cavanagh (2006) explains how the organizational context is likely to have an impact upon individual behavior. However, only Orenstein’s (2007) multidimensional model incorporates multiple organizational theories in its method and design. This meta-model of executive coaching considers it an organizational intervention at the individual level, and brings a diversity of perspective uncommon in most other coaching models. The organizational framework offers a more expansive understanding of the leader, his or her organizational context, and the interaction between these two parties during the coaching process.

Organizational theories are no less important in the conceptualization and practice of leadership coaching in education than they are in executive coaching. However, there exists a strained relationship between organizational theories and professional development in the field of education, where personalized development opportunities are loosely defined. Often called coaching, individual development in education is frequently provided by peers or mentors and intended to solve job-specific, technical problems. Some models and programs appear to have a foundation in organizational theories, but
upon closer inspection, one can discern that the theories are espoused more readily than they are applied.

Returning to the example of ExEL, the program’s change leadership framework advocated for a dual focus on both organizational and individual change processes. In one part of the focus, leaders were asked to look externally and identify difficulties that characterize school systems. An introduction to the theoretical framework acknowledged that taking account of the organizational contexts of society and the education system at large provided perspective and background knowledge (Wagner et al., 2006).

“Organizational beliefs and behaviors” (societal and systemic factors) were mentioned as important elements unique to the context of education systems—including responsiveness, leading and following, and autonomy. The authors speculated on the systemic impact of these factors. For example, they believed unique patterns of “leading and following,” had led to well-defined chains of command, a shared commitment to help everyone, and a need to demonstrate role-specific expectations in educational contexts.

Rather than utilizing a theory of organization, the ExEL designers introduced organizational factors as an informative perspective, but they qualified its mention by warning their readers against using it to assign blame. The framework referenced multiple organizational levels and the program attempted to increase their alignment, yet the system’s role in the process of effecting major organizational change was not addressed in practice. While the ExEL program was more rigorous in its theoretical approach compared to other examples in education, its methods did not integrate the organization into the process of systemic change.
In a major review of the literature on coaching for school reform, Brown, Stroh, Fouts, and Baker (2005) similarly reported that most coaching programs did not identify a theoretical basis, but rather referenced certain theoretical frameworks through their methods (including collaboration, reflection, social learning, and paraphrasing). A program might justify a particular approach to reform by the way it impacts an entire school, calling it a *systemic* approach. In practice, however, its approach may actually involve training all members of the school in a new instructional method. Training all the people in a school does not denote a systems-theory based approach to school reform, but rather an individual-level didactic intervention to educate all people who operate within a certain system.

A true organizational approach to this school change would consider the multiple levels within which each individual is embedded, how the school-level change will affect the district, and how the district-level change will in turn affect the school (Alderfer & Smith, 1982). In addition, it would consider how this change will affect the system at the student, classroom, and parent levels. How do the new instructional methods alter the school’s preexisting approach to learning? To what extent will the new approach to learning impact the relationship between students and teacher? Will there be a shift in the relationship between groups of teachers? Were all stakeholder opinions considered before altering shared assumptions about learning? Implementing the intervention strategy at one level (individual teachers) to affect another level (curricula) without considering potential influence of or ramifications on other levels renders this method an atheoretical approach which, at best, merely implies organizational underpinnings. In both education
and executive coaching fields, organizational theories appear to be endorsed in theory more often than they are applied in practice.

Organizational Similarities and Differences

Schools and school districts are similar to but also different from other types of systems or organizations. Like other organizations, schools contain multiple formal and informal groups embedded in larger systems, which also contain smaller embedded systems (Alderfer & Smith, 1982). As in other organizations, affecting one embedded level has an impact on all intergroup relationships. Organizations are comprised of individuals who come together to meet the official and unofficial needs of the organization and its members (Schein, 1965). Schools also experience conflict, distribute power, share basic assumptions, perpetuate cultural practices, and manage widely variable emotions associated with the constant conflict between meeting individual and organizational needs. They maintain hierarchical relationships and experience authority dynamics as in other organizations of people, and as in other organizations, promotions from the level of individual contributor to the role of manager of others (teacher to principal or higher) implies that successful employees possess an expertise in leading adults.

In addition to the similarities, educational organizations are also different from other types of organizations in their structure and management. Many authors have generalized and speculated about the unique ways in which education systems differ from other organizations, but in the interest of simplicity, the following points will be limited to sources most closely related to the current investigation.
Structurally, “schools have been, and still largely are, organized and administered as bureaucracies or... using the factory as a model” (Owens, 2001, p. 251). Framed in systemic terminology, schools could be considered structures that produce output from domain-specific input: specifically, children are taught appropriate socialization behaviors along with general knowledge. Given the behavioral nature of this output and the processes enacted to produce it, schools are highly dependent on cooperation among stakeholder groups (Ingersoll, 2003), including clients (students, parents, public), employees (principals, teachers, staff), and management (district leaders, Board of Education), which renders human resources of utmost importance. Yet real control in schools is decentralized and can be difficult to pinpoint. Some claim schools actually function in an under-bounded, loosely coupled system of chaos (Weick, 1976), in which systems are related to one another, but their processes are not directly linked. This can make cooperation among stakeholder groups especially challenging and an efficient factory model difficult to realize.

The loosely-coupled structure of education systems has implications for management, particularly with regard to power, control, and authority. Accountability currently falls on the highest level in the hierarchy: principals are held accountable for school achievement, and superintendents are held accountable for district achievement. Managerially, these leadership roles are different from the roles of other leaders, given their limited capacity to exercise autonomous control. They do not have the power to exercise control fully over the conditions in which students learn or schools function. Instead, human and other types of resources are organized by higher district and government levels far removed from the affected organizational setting. The School
Board wields control over school decisions such as hiring, and the state controls district matters such as curricular standards. Important building-level factors (composition of teaching staff and curricular content) dramatically influence the intergroup dynamics within schools for building- and district-level leaders.

As a pivotal public service organization, the education system’s structure is difficult to change. Schools provide mandatory services to students, so the system cannot cease functioning for a year to restructure its organization. Maintenance of this structure may be further facilitated by its organizational members. Owens (2001) asserts that most educators entered school at an early age and continued to participate in the school system as they developed into adulthood, which increased their commitment to traditional core values, beliefs, and goals of education. In this way, school culture may be perpetuated each year by educators who work in a system that socialized them as children, developed them as students, and employed them as professional adults.

As a public institution controlled at the local, state, and federal levels, the education system has a mandate to fulfill diverse and sometimes competing expectations of multiple stakeholder groups, including students, teachers, parents, the government, the public, and the Board of Education. Stakeholder groups continuously exert pressure on the education system to evolve along with their shifting needs. It can be difficult to achieve one group’s objective if doing so conflicts with achievement of objectives from other sources. With so many different groups vying for their own needs to be met, being an educative organization or a leader in the middle of the system becomes a difficult role to fill, unique to the field of education and profession of educational leadership. Schools may benefit from a new development option such as leadership coaching based on
similarities with business organizations, but the option may be more difficult for schools to incorporate given their unique organizational characteristics.

**Context of Professional Practice**

In addition to the organizational aspects of schools and school districts, the role of educational leadership is highly influenced by definitions and standards of professional practice. The contexts of both the education organization and standards for educational leadership practice must be taken into consideration when applying a new form of professional development for school leaders. The revised Interstate School Leaders Licensure Commission standards (ISLLC, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008) define the professional context. (See Appendix B for a list of the standards and their associated functions.) ISLLC standards are national policy standards intended to encourage the effective practice of all school leaders. Recently updated in 2008 from their original adoption in 1996 (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996), the ISLLC policy standards are based on the most current research on effective school leadership, including policy studies, empirical research, leadership texts, and other craft knowledge.

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), comprised of practitioners and stakeholders from multiple national professional associations in the field of educational leadership, developed these standards, which “can set parameters for developing assessment instruments, practice standards, and professional development to

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6 American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), American Association of School Administrators (AASA), Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA), National School Boards Association (NSBA), and University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA)
facilitate performance growth toward expert practice…[and] can help to further clarify expectations for professional development and the performance of veteran principals” (CCSSO, 2008, p. 4). The ISLLC standards are to be used at all levels of governance to create systems of evaluation and accountability, induction and licensing programs, preparation programs, and professional development programs for principals at all stages in their leadership career. Each national policy standard is accompanied by high-level guidance regarding the expected traits, work functions and responsibilities, and tangible behavioral indicators that define the professional context of educational leadership.

Alignment of coaching and ISLLC standards. Leadership coaching appears to be aligned in some ways with the standards and behavioral indicators of ISLLC. Specifically, leadership coaching may be appropriate to address elements of Standards 2–6 and could be a good model of the growth process indicated in Standard 1. Although the definition of Standard 2 seems to most directly indicate instructional leadership, with its mention of creating a particular culture and developing staff through professional growth, language in many of its associated behavioral indicators (particularly “Supervise instruction”) implicate mostly instructional responsibilities. Three indicators implicated non-instructional responsibilities (2A, 2C, 2F) that could be addressed via personalized leadership coaching. Standard 3 instructed effective leaders to manage resources (including human resources) efficiently (3B). Part of efficient resource management involves developing the capacity for distributive leadership (3D), which implies a divergence from the traditional hierarchical models of decision making familiar in

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7 These were formerly known as “knowledge, skills and dispositions.”
education. Managing human capital and sharing the leadership role are two interpersonal tasks implicated in this seemingly management-related standard.

More collaboration was suggested in Standard 4, which advised school leaders to build relationships with multiple stakeholders and make best use of the diversity around them. Promoting diversity (4B) implies adherence to a particular value structure (as does 5C), and building relationships with community members (4D) implies making an investment in stakeholders who are only indirectly related to student achievement.

Standard 6 explicated a relationship between the school leader and the larger context in which the school is embedded (6B). Coaching within an organizational framework might help leaders understand how their behaviors in the school can influence other ecological levels addressed by the standards. In addition, coaching can promote the self-examination of leadership tendencies so as to make adaptation more comfortable (6C).

Most directly, coaching can be applied to the examination of personal behaviors required in Standard 5, which instructs principals to model self-awareness and reflection (5B). Coaching can facilitate these two skills that can encourage leaders to think more contextually about issues and isolate the influence of their own self-imposed attributions or assumptions. Coaches can question patterns of thought and decision-making to help leaders analyze the consequences of their familiar ways of leading (5D) and promote thoughtful change. Practicing thoughtful change may lead to the practice of “promoting continuous and sustainable improvement,” as stated in behavioral indicator 1D. The remaining behaviors associated with Standard 1 provide a good description of the change process applied via leadership coaching. In pursuit of a shared vision and mission (1A) developed collaboratively, data are collected to identify goals (1B), plans to achieve goals
are created and implemented (1C), and plans are revised based on constant monitoring and periodical evaluation of progress (1E).

New definition of professional development. Some researchers have begun to clarify the new purpose of professional development for school leaders: to achieve “principals who are both prepared and supported to provide leadership for learning” (Wallace Foundation, 2008, p. 11). Traditional professional development activities such as workshops, institutes, and conferences are more familiar to educational leaders, but recent reviews of new and established pre-service principal development programs revealed that their position of dominance among other methods of professional development is changing (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005; Wallace Foundation, 2008). Research suggests that individual professional development needs fluctuate for principals as pressing administrative competencies vary within different school and community contexts. Contextual elements such as the type of school, contractual requirements, community characteristics, and cultural and economic factors impact the principal’s work toward designing effective instruction, building community within and outside the school, and managing systemic change (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005; Peterson, 2002). Generic leadership development is no longer expected to support the broad range of context-specific school leadership roles.

More specifically, “successful school leaders influence student achievement through two important pathways: the support and development of effective teachers, and the implementation of effective organizational processes” (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005, p. 1) just as the ISLLC standards demonstrate to some extent. Responsibilities to optimize organizational processes are promoted explicitly in
Standard 3, but responsibilities to support and develop effective teachers are only evident as functions of Standards 2 and 3. Some researchers have argued that the ISLLC policy standards do not sufficiently emphasize certain leadership behaviors associated with increased student achievement (Waters & Grubb, 2004). Personal and interpersonal expectations such as these are woven into the behavioral fabric of these professional standards, all of which begin, “An education leader promotes the success of every student…” Current standards of professional practice may underemphasize leaders’ responsibility to remain aware of the personal issues and needs of teachers and staff, maintain flexibility in their leadership style, appropriately acknowledge accomplishments and failures, advocate for the school to other stakeholder groups, and maintain visibility in the school.

Examinations of the organizational and professional contexts of school leadership suggest that schools share common physical structures, but reflect infinitely different cultures and contexts. The widely variable knowledge, skills, and values presented in ISLLC standards and behavioral indicators reinforce the increasingly difficult challenge of successful educational leadership. Such variable parameters for professional development call for an equally diverse and localized professional development opportunity such as executive coaching, which could help leaders adopt the personal behaviors necessary yet not explicitly implicated in ISLLC’s achievement-driven standards.
Summary

Executive coaching is developing as a professional practice, while educational leadership is changing in its conception of effective practice and appropriate professional development. School leadership and executive coaching are two fields currently undergoing a paradigm shift, but not in conjunction with one another. Prominent examples of how the word “coaching” is applied to educators were presented in the previous chapter to demonstrate the diversity of usage. Business research clarified some of the confusion in education’s nascent terminology with respect to personalized professional development. Both the organizational and professional contexts of educational leadership were described. Aspects of executive coaching may suit the new, more personal development methods recommended by education literature.
CHAPTER III

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Abstract

A survey was administered to a group of school principals and supervisors in New Jersey. Educational leaders were asked for their opinions about current professional development and aspects of executive coaching (more appropriately termed “leadership coaching”), in order to better understand the potential value of this new type of professional development. The purpose of the survey was twofold: to identify how school leaders feel about professional development in general (particularly leadership coaching), and to distinguish among elements of coaching that add more or less value in school leaders’ work environments. This chapter provides an overview of the survey construction and distribution, and data collection and analysis procedures.

Survey Distribution

In order to reach the largest audience most efficiently, the survey was administered using an online method through www.surveymonkey.com. (See Appendix C to review the survey questions.) The anonymous, twenty-three-item survey did not ask respondents to provide any identifying information such as name, email address, or school address. There were no confidential documents to destroy or identifying information to be deleted after data collection. Once the online survey closed, the survey
items and all data collected were deleted from the Survey Monkey host website. In accordance with the IRB agreement obtained on February 10, 2009 from the Rutgers University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, the anonymous data will remain in the researcher’s personal records forever.

A database of school leaders’ email addresses was not publicly available, which required the researcher to obtain assistance in disseminating the electronic survey. The New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA), a professional organization for educational leaders in New Jersey, agreed to distribute three mass emails to their current membership on the researcher’s behalf. NJPSA has provided professional development services for principals, vice principals, supervisors, directors, assistant superintendents, superintendents, and chief school administrators for almost 30 years.\(^8\) The Executive Director of NJPSA signed a letter of cooperation in which the organization agreed to distribute an invitation email, a reminder email, and a follow-up email containing summative survey results to all current members. The invitation email included a very brief description of the survey questions and the study’s purpose, along with a hyperlink to the survey. When the professional organization sent the email, the researcher’s email address appeared in the “From” field. Accordingly, if leaders replied directly to the invitation email with questions, the researcher received the question rather than NJPSA. The professional organization therefore maintained the confidentiality of their members’ private information and did not disclose email addresses to the researcher, but participants with questions or concerns were able to communicate with the researcher electronically, by phone, or by mail with any inquiries. Principals were given one month

\(^8\) [http://www.njpsa.org/about/](http://www.njpsa.org/about/)
to complete the survey, and one reminder email was sent mid-month. As an incentive to participate in the survey, school leaders were promised access to results after the survey closed. Following the conclusion of data collection, a high-level summary of the survey findings was uploaded to their internal website, and the entire organization’s membership received a link to the results via email. This summary included response rates, item-level frequencies and/or averages, and a graphic display of the results where possible. To protect respondents’ confidentiality, no demographic subgroups or individuals were isolated or reported separately.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was requested prior to asking principals and supervisors to answer any survey questions. A pre-survey item instructed potential participants to read information on the terms of their participation and provide consent if they agreed to the terms. The respondent’s answer to this yes/no question directed the internet browser to either the survey questions or the final webpage, where leaders were thanked for their interest. If informed consent was provided, the respondent’s browser was directed to the first question in the survey. If he or she did not consent, the respondent’s browser bypassed all survey questions and advanced to the final page, where respondents were thanked for their interest and provided with a “Done” hyperlink that closed the browser window. Data were only collected from individuals who first provided consent.

Survey Items

The first question asked school leaders about the nature of their current relationship to professional development. This question was intended to ascertain the
extent to which professional development was an important part of educational leaders’ practice. If professional development was not important to educational leaders, developing new methods would be a trivial pursuit. The next two questions were intended to ascertain where professional development activities were most frequently identified and how they were most frequently chosen. Results informed the current patterns of behavior and decision-making capabilities of survey respondents in terms of identifying and selecting professional development opportunities. Three questions about the current methods school leaders use to address job-related concerns investigated the extent to which they have personalized needs that are not met through the opportunities currently offered to them. Responses to this section helped determine whether there was an interest in personalized professional development and whether the quality of available options could be improved.

The next six questions asked for reactions to major components and unique elements of executive coaching as a professional development opportunity. Taken as a whole, executive coaching is far too complex (and novel to the population of interest) to present as a single idea for reflection and evaluation. Therefore, the researcher highlighted the most important and unique elements derived from executive coaching theory and practice that differentiate it from more traditional professional development services and other personalized development services. Readers were presented with a brief description of leadership coaching service elements, including the relational nature of the service, the time commitment involved, the type of provider, the flexible nature of the goals, and potential candidates for leadership coaching. Two items immediately following the description gauged the extent to which leaders were open to the idea of
coaching and interested in pursuing the service. Two additional questions investigated potential issues specifically relevant to this personalized development opportunity in the field of education: the unique time required for coaching and the novelty of this more general professional development model to the field of education. Finally, two open-ended questions left space for leaders to identify, in their own words, any appealing or unappealing aspects of leadership coaching. Answers to these questions revealed general reactions to the description along with both positive and negative perceptions of the coaching model.

Seven demographic items helped identify the specific population of educational leaders who responded to the survey. Demographic questions asked for school level (primary, secondary, district), current role held in education, years of service in education, years in current role, gender, a measure of district SES in New Jersey (District Factor Group, DFG), and the number of leadership-level peers that worked with each leader. Results provided insight into the representativeness of this sample of school leaders to inform the generalizability of results. Paired with the interest items mentioned above, these items also helped pinpoint where, in the vast population of school administrators, each group’s interests and needs might be similar or different, and where leadership coaching might be most desired or applicable (among different school levels, SES levels, experience levels, leadership support levels, etc.).

DFG⁹ is a public rating of socioeconomic status for school districts developed by the State Department of Education in 1975. It is a way to group schools and compare across social factors when looking at educational outcomes and school performance.

⁹ See the New Jersey State Department of Education website for further information: http://www.state.nj.us/education/finance/sf/dfgdesc.shtml
DFG is a composite statistical index for districts based on six community-level factors: (1) percent of population without a high school diploma; (2) percent of population with some college education; (3) occupation; (4) unemployment rate; (5) percent of population in poverty; and (6) median family income. The index is calculated using decennial census data, and calculation methods are revised every 10 years to keep pace with current best practices in measurement theory. Districts in factor group A are those most in need, while a DFG of J is assigned to the most affluent schools. Prior to the development of DFG, performance comparisons were drawn between school systems that served students of disparate backgrounds, regardless of each district’s community SES. No authority mandated the development or use of the DFG rating system. Rather, it was intended to support more appropriate comparisons among schools serving students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds; it was developed in response to research indicating that social factors external to the school system were the most influential determinants of educational outcomes.

*Survey Item Organization*

Survey questions were organized from more general questions to more specific questions. Demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey to reinforce the confidentiality of the survey and prioritize the survey questions for respondents. Asking demographic questions last hopefully encouraged more leaders to participate and share their opinions about professional development. Respondents who may have been deterred from sharing private information or those who had insufficient time to complete the survey completed the most important items first.
Procedure for Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data for each item was analyzed via descriptive statistics summarizing the average response (item mean) when a rating scale was used, and the sum of respondents that selected each answer (response rate or frequency) when rating scales were not used. Summative statistics informed the degree to which educational leaders felt professional development was important, where they currently sought assistance, where they wanted to receive assistance, and the applicability of the executive coaching model in the field of education. Inferential statistics were calculated to investigate whether some populations were more interested in coaching than others. Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted on the interest-level items (interest in learning more, interest in pursuing services) by a number of the demographic variables such as role, tenure, and school level, to determine whether specific subgroups of respondents were more interested in coaching than other subgroups.

Qualitative Analysis

Open-ended questions provided an opportunity to analyze rich thematic findings using school leaders’ own words. The plethora of qualitative data collected in text responses required analysis procedures that combined multiple methods, in an effort to meet ethical research standards and exhaust the message conveyed through the data set (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980) was used to distinguish a relevant sample and analyze data using the available resources most efficiently. In order to manage the large quantity of data, a limiting procedure defined relevant data, and a random sampling procedure was applied before using a tentative code.
list to structure initial coding efforts. This tool is suitable for analyzing text collected in a narrowly defined context such as an online survey. When the structured organization of a code list was not available (in cases where respondents commented on topics indirectly or unrelated to the service description), qualitative data from open-ended questions were coded using inductive methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Codes and groupings emerged from the data inductively during the coding process, instead of being prescribed by a structured code list. At the end of each coding step, constant comparison was applied (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to increase validity of the data analysis.

Content analysis promotes effective management of extraneous responses to unstructured online survey questions through data reduction, which pares down the population of analyzable raw data. To maximize efficiency, it allows the researcher to be more structured in the initial stages of coding, particularly in the identification of which data will be analyzed. Suitable data are “anything connected with the phenomena of interest” (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 171). In contrast to lengthier paragraphs of narrative data collected via interpersonal interviews (which is more common among qualitative methods), brief texts from open-ended survey responses are much more terse units of qualitative data. Each independent respondent (school leader) was considered to be the sampling unit of analysis, so individual respondents were eligible to be sampled. Each school leader had an opportunity to respond to multiple open-ended questions, and the answer to each question was coded separately. Each sampled unit (respondent) provided an answer to three separate questions (Appealing, Unappealing, Other Thoughts), each of which could be assigned one or more codes, depending on their categorical and sub-categorical content. Relatively unrestricted parameters on the length of responses meant
that answers could be as short or long as respondents desired. A phrase—two or more words communicating a single idea—was the smallest meaningful unit that could be provided in open-ended text responses. The phrase was therefore considered the basic unit of analysis in the open-ended response data. When an individual response included more than a few words, it could be coded multiple times for multiple phrases within one category (Service, Outcome, Other) and with one or more emergent subcategories within each category.

Inductive, open coding allowed for the content of the data to drive its own organization (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) when a less structured approach to coding was required. In the inductive process of analysis, tentative codes were assigned to phrases in text responses. Each open-ended question was coded and analyzed separately; as tentative subcategories were assigned to phrasal units, category definitions took shape. Titles were drawn either directly from the school leaders’ language (in-vivo codes) or from the researcher’s concept of the main idea expressed by a number of school leaders. Subsequent responses provided additional thematic evidence that redefined tentative subcategory titles and definitions mid-coding, so that subcategories were often revised during the coding process. When subcategories changed in title or definition, the coding process for that open-ended item recommenced. All previously coded responses to the item under review were revisited from the beginning under the newly revised coding structure, and adjustments to old subcategory assignments were made; the latter increased consistency among subcategories of responses.

When certain subcategory codes were too bulky in number to account for their thematic content, responses were labeled a third time with more specific codes, as a way
to more thoroughly communicate the ideas expressed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process for coding inductively at the more detailed subcategory level paralleled the process for open coding applied to categories and subcategories. This additional round of categorization facilitated the creation of a more complete description in areas in which respondents provided complex feedback.

Clearly defining codes assigned to each category during analysis is important to enhance the replicability of the coding process and lessen the impact of single-researcher bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process of constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) involves reviewing similarly coded responses to ensure definitional consistency within each category and clarify any further levels of understanding. This step compares responses within each category to ensure sameness. Constant comparison also involves reviewing oppositely-coded responses to ensure the differential content of the items and the mutual exclusivity of each category. This step compares responses between categories to ensure difference. Constant comparison was applied at the end of each analysis.

Reporting the frequencies of opinions provides a relatively objective way to weight ideas (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Rather than determining that one idea is more important than another from the researcher’s personal standpoint, meaning can be ascribed to ideas by their frequency of occurrence.

Exploring the subject of leadership coaching with school leaders required coding with a descriptive purpose, rather than a causal purpose intending to reveal theoretical connections among concepts. The three major, open-ended questions asked respondents to identify areas of leadership coaching they felt were more or less appealing and to share any additional thoughts on leadership coaching (Appealing, Unappealing, Other
Thoughts). Qualitative data sampling began with the open-ended Appealing item. The first step was to divide text responses to the Appealing item into two categories: those that responded to the phenomenon of interest, and those that responded beyond the scope of the phenomenon of interest. The phenomenon of interest was specified by the brief definition of leadership coaching provided in the survey.

*Sampling for qualitative analysis.* A representative sample of appropriate responders to the Appealing item was randomly selected to undergo a full qualitative analysis. Random numbers were generated online using Research Randomizer. The Social Psychology Network provided services for research purposes free of charge. First, all randomly selected, appropriate responses were reviewed in order to gain a high-level perspective on the essence of opinions. Basic thematic patterns identified in the initial review of all data informed the first round of coding, which distinguished among the most general categories of Service, Outcome, and Other. Service-category responses were distinct from other major categories of responses because they aligned with content presented in the definition of leadership coaching. Responses were reviewed and coded with one of the general categories, then reviewed again and coded with one or more subcategories. Phrases in the survey’s definition of leadership coaching comprised a structured code list of Service subcategories. Responses related to Outcomes or Other categories included phrases that indirectly addressed the phenomenon of interest, which were coded using inductive, open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Inductive analysis continued with coding guided by patterns revealed in previous rounds of analysis until...

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10 www.randomizer.org
subcategories were sufficiently saturated and all phrases were classified (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Sampling and coding according to the aforementioned process was first applied to the Appealing item, then to the Unappealing item, and finally to the Other Thoughts item. Participants sampled for the Appealing item remained a part of the sample for analysis of the remaining open-ended items. Respondents who commented outside the scope of the phenomenon in the Appealing item were permanently excluded from the sampling pool. When an inadequate sample size was left for Unappealing and Other Thoughts items because of nonresponses or inappropriate responses, previously unsampled participants who responded appropriately to the Appealing item were randomly sampled to increase sample sizes for the last two qualitative items. This procedure saved some time that would have been necessary to distinguish relevant data for each item. The Appealing and Unappealing categories represented the opinions of approximately the same group of school leaders.

**Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the method of investigation applied to the survey administered to school principals and supervisors. Procedures for survey construction and online survey distribution were described, along with details concerning the acquisition of appropriate, informed consent from human subjects. Methods for data sampling, quantitative, and qualitative analysis were also presented. Qualitative data analysis involved a combination of content analysis and inductive coding.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Abstract

This chapter will provide a detailed description of quantitative and qualitative results of the survey administration. Quantitative results informed demographics of survey respondents as well as their professional development preferences and behaviors. All demographic subgroups were represented, and professional development was a clear priority for all, as demonstrated through their thoughts and actions. Qualitative data informed specific areas of the leadership coaching model that were more or less appealing to the audience of school administrators. Overall, educational leaders expressed interest in the novel opportunity for professional development, and particular interest in aspects unique to the personalized model of leadership coaching. In their criticism, they expressed some logistical concerns about implementation.

Quantitative Data

Demographic Data

A summary of descriptive statistics is presented for the quantitative items, followed by an in-depth, qualitative analysis of open-ended text items. The participating professional organization reported that their current, active organizational membership consisted of 1,029 Principals, 1,719 Assistant or Vice Principals (AP/VPs), 936
Supervisors, and 377 Directors, for a grand total of 4,061 members at the time this survey was conducted. The survey link was sent to all active members of the professional organization and accessed by 796 of these members, for a response rate of approximately 20%. Not all respondents completed every item in the survey; n-values for relevant items are provided.

Survey participants represented all levels within each demographic variable, including school type, years of experience, role in school, and New Jersey District Factor Group (DFG). When asked to specify their role in the school, respondents identified themselves as Principals (33%), Vice or Assistant Principals (17%), Supervisors (29%), Directors (14%), and retirees (7%). The distribution of respondent roles is similar to the distribution of the full population reported by NJPSA, except for Vice or Assistant Principals (VP/AP), who were underrepresented in this survey. Only 17% of survey respondents claimed to be a Vice or Assistant Principal, although NJPSA reported that VP/APs comprise about 42% of their total membership. Approximately 58% of survey respondents identified themselves as female and 42% identified as male. In terms of experience level, survey respondents reported working in education from four to 51 years, at an average of 23.2 years (n = 632). Respondents were employed in their current administrative role from one to 37 years, with an average of 6.9 years (n = 618). Participants represented multiple school levels, including K – 5 (20.5%), K – 8 (10%), 6 – 8 (9%), 9 – 12 (25.5%), District level (29%), or None of the above (6%) (n = 628). Building leadership teams ranged in size from one to 15 members, and the average leadership team consisted of four members (n = 586). Approximately 23% of responding school leaders reported that they were the only leaders in their building. An additional
23% reported that two leaders were in charge of their building or that they worked with one co-administrator.

For purposes of the current study, DFG membership organizes the opinions of educational leaders across the multiple levels of external social factors that influence the nature of the job. All eight New Jersey District Factor Groups (DFGs) were represented. As shown in Table 1, the frequency distribution of school DFGs reported in the current study is similar to both 1990 and 2000 census distributions of district DFG. Unfortunately, 2010 census data were still being collected at the time of writing, so the most current district DFG distribution was not available for comparison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DFG</th>
<th>1990 Census</th>
<th>2000 Census</th>
<th>Current study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>GH</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>573 districts</td>
<td>549 districts</td>
<td>426 leaders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional Development Preferences

School leaders were asked for the frequency with which they think about their own professional development. More than half of responding school leaders (52%) reported thinking about professional development on a daily basis (n = 678). A majority
of respondents (90%) claimed to think about their own development either daily, weekly, or monthly. Professional development seemed to be important to the responding educational leaders.

In an open-ended question, respondents were asked to identify where they currently learn about professional development opportunities. Respondents provided two types of responses: more general communication modalities by which they received professional development information, and/or primary sources that directly communicated professional development information (n = 660). As seen in Figure 1, the internet was the most popular modality, followed closely by journals. Figure 2 shows that professional development associations were by far the most popular source of information concerning professional development opportunities. The professional organization that partnered with the researcher for this study (NJPSA) was named by 29% of responding leaders. An additional 11% of respondents mentioned ASCD (formerly the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development), another professional organization for educators.

![Figure 1. Modalities for learning about professional development. Note: n = 660](image)
Figure 2. Sources of information about professional development. Note: n = 660

One question asked respondents to identify who makes the final decision regarding their engagement in professional development activities. The majority of responding educational leaders (90%) reported that they identify and elect to engage in professional development activities themselves, rather than having decisions made for them by others (n = 675).

Educational leaders were asked to consider the nature of their current tendencies to seek help for job-related concerns. When provided with a list of potential helpers (accessible sources who work in close proximity to many educational leaders) and asked to select the person, if any, to whom they most commonly take their job-related concerns, respondents most frequently reported seeking assistance from a peer or immediate supervisor at school. As shown at the bottom of Figure 3, approximately 21% claimed to address their concerns outside of school with family members, friends, or a coach, and 1% did not seek help from anyone (n = 674). Similarly, 74% of educational leaders preferred to consult with a current or retired educational leader, while 21% preferred the external support of a coach or leadership specialist, and 5% preferred no consultation.
Educational leaders were also asked to approximate the helpfulness of the personalized professional assistance they received for job-related concerns. Helpfulness of personal sources was rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = Not at all, to 7 = A great deal. Overall, the average helpfulness rating for all sources of assistance was $m = 5.89$ ($n = 661$). To make the average helpfulness ratings more meaningful, responses were grouped according to the source of help, as represented in Figure 3. When average helpfulness was calculated for each source of help, helpfulness ranged from 5.64 to 6.50. Immediate supervisors and coaches were rated more helpful sources of assistance than others, although coaches were only identified as the primary source of help by six respondents. Family members and peers were equally helpful. Particularly for the majority of respondents who currently consult with family members, friends, or their peers for job-related concerns, the helpfulness of their personalized assistance leaves some room for improvement.

Figure 3. Helpfulness ratings for the most popular sources of assistance.
Responses to Leadership Coaching

The next step for introducing coaching as a new type of personalized professional development in the field of education might be to raise awareness about coaching and/or actually provide coaching services for educational leaders. To investigate the appropriateness of these options, respondents were asked two interest-level questions on the same 7-point scale ranging from 1 = Not at all, to 7 = A great deal. First, leaders were asked to rate the extent to which they were interested in learning more about leadership coaching as a professional development service. Second, they were asked to rate the extent to which they were interested in pursuing leadership coaching services. Across all respondents, 60% were interested in learning more about leadership coaching as a professional development option \( (m = 4.98, n = 657) \), and 52% were interested in pursuing leadership coaching services \( (m = 4.60, n = 610) \). A majority of responding leaders reported being open to learning more about the option of leadership coaching, if not actually pursuing the service.

Time is a limited resource for most busy professionals and it is a core design element in leadership coaching. Leaders were explicitly asked whether they felt it was possible for them to dedicate one hour each week to discuss work-related issues. Approximately 67% of respondents reported they could foresee dedicating one hour per week to discussing work-related issues \( (n = 662) \). An additional 20% were unsure whether they could dedicate an hour, while 13% could not foresee dedicating one hour per week. Responses to this item indicated that the time commitment required for coaching services may not be a barrier for most educational leaders.
Another unique element of leadership coaching is its absence in the context of education in comparison to its prevalence in the private business sector. Those in the field of education may believe coaching does not apply to their context, while others may believe it applies to educators other than themselves; and still others may believe it applies to all educators. When provided with these options and asked to select the response that best described how they felt about the context in which coaching might apply, 91% of respondents believed leadership coaching could apply to educators including themselves. Another 6% believed leadership coaching might be applicable for educators other than themselves, and the remaining 3% believed that leadership coaching applies only in the private sector, not in education (n = 595). Although leadership coaching was not a traditional professional development option for educators, most educational leaders believed it could be applicable for those in the context of education.

Finally, items addressing interest in leadership coaching allowed for exploration into a potential target market among groups of educational leaders in New Jersey. The average level of interest in learning more about leadership coaching and the average level of interest in pursuing leadership coaching were split and compared between gender groups, DFGs, tenure groups (based on years of experience), and school levels. No statistically significant difference in the average level of interest was identified based on the aforementioned comparisons of various demographic groups. At this time, a target market for learning more about or pursuing leadership coaching in New Jersey could not be located using the demographic information collected.
Qualitative Data

Remaining items were three unstructured, open-ended questions that asked leaders to identify what appealed to them about leadership coaching (Appealing), what appealed to them less (Unappealing), and any other thoughts they wanted to share at the end of the survey (Other Thoughts). Methods of qualitative analysis utilized a combination of content analysis, constant comparison, and open, inductive coding, as described previously. A random sample of 200 respondents who appropriately answered the first Appealing question, “What if anything about leadership coaching appeals to you?” was selected to undergo comprehensive examination. At first glance, phrases in the Appealing item appeared to cluster around two major categories as presented in Figure 4: Service (phrases directly tied to the service elements presented in the definition), and Outcome (phrases that anticipated coaching outcomes). Some respondents identified both Service and Outcome concepts in their responses, and a few responded with an unrelated answer, usually expressing their uncertainty, in the Other category.

![Figure 4. Primary response categories in the Appealing item. Note: n = 200](image.png)
Appealing phrases most frequently fell under the Service category and pointed to one or more of the elements of coaching service (subcategories) named specifically in the description. In alignment with the methods of content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980), the paragraph description of leadership coaching was deconstructed into phrases to create a provisional list used for coding subcategories of Service. See Table 2 for a brief sample and definition of each subcategory. Within the broader Service category, respondents most frequently identified appealing characteristics of the service provider and professional conversation. Other appealing aspects of the service included the individualized process, the relational nature of the service, and the application of an organizational theory to practice.

A Note about Qualitative Tables

Since respondents often used multiple phrases to mention more than one aspect in their responses to open-ended questions, each participant’s item response was assigned multiple categorical and/or subcategorical codes. One individual’s response could include multiple phrases and touch on multiple themes, and therefore carry multiple codes. Percentages reported in the tables below reflect the relative frequency with which each theme arose in the random sample. They are not summative, but instead indicate each category’s relative frequency of representation within the overall sample of respondents for each item. Sample quotations are provided to make the categories more vivid. They are often paraphrased to accommodate the most data possible within a limited space, while preserving the integrity of participant responses. Themes with fewer than three responses do not have a quotation to protect the confidentiality of survey respondents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Provider</td>
<td>A person is available to help</td>
<td>“Two minds think better than one.”</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation (Content of Service)</td>
<td>Discuss job concerns, share ideas, and talk about difficult topics</td>
<td>“The opportunity to discuss the elephant in the room.”</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized</td>
<td>Flexibility and practicality of the job-embedded, goal setting process</td>
<td>“It is driven by the leader’s desire (what they want and need), not what other entities say they should need.”</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship-based</td>
<td>Personal, ongoing, one-on-one relationship with someone</td>
<td>“Developing a personal, trusting relationship with someone who can help you achieve your leadership potential.”</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework</td>
<td>Applying outside perspective of organizational theory to educational leadership is relevant and missing</td>
<td>“Principals need to be trained in leadership skills just like any other manager.”</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience – New Administrators</td>
<td>Coaching would be good for new administrators</td>
<td>“Many newer administrators come into their positions with few years in the classroom. This transition without experience has a negative impact on their role as leader.”</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Service</td>
<td>A service is provided</td>
<td>“The fact that a resource is available.”</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Collaborate with another person, as in the mutual goal-setting and process termination</td>
<td>“I think educators could benefit from the collaboration and support [leadership coaching] has to offer.”</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated Time</td>
<td>Weekly, concentrated time to focus on professional needs</td>
<td>“Scheduling the time to stop the daily roller coaster and think about my professional needs.”</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience – All Administrators</td>
<td>Coaching would benefit all (new and experienced) school leaders</td>
<td>“I feel it will be a great thing for leaders. . . to keep up with new issues.”</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A more specific investigation was conducted into the most prominent Service-related subcategory (Service Provider) because of the great diversity in leaders’ responses related to the coach. Service Provider responses were coded a third time into one or more subcategories, with reference to the service provider’s characteristics. A structured code list was available for use in the initial stage of this step because the service provider was characterized as a “professional with expertise in organizational theory and practice” in the survey’s coaching description. As shown in Table 3, the most popular provider characteristic was objectivity, followed by expertise and the coach’s role as a sounding board. Leaders strayed from the survey’s definition and described appealing service providers as knowledgeable, external, neutral, nonjudgmental, nonevaluative, and trustworthy.

### Table 3

**Appealing Service-related Service Provider Subcategories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Neutrality of a provider unaffiliated with the district</td>
<td>“You don’t have to worry that this person will conduct your performance review.”</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Knowledgeable specialist</td>
<td>“There is someone available for you to talk with on a regular basis who has knowledge and is willing to help.”</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounding Board</td>
<td>Nonjudgmental listener</td>
<td>“I can share job-related concerns without fear that I will be seen as not capable.”</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Trustworthy provider in a confidential relationship</td>
<td>“I would feel freer to give details that might help me make a decision which I might not share with colleagues.”</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some respondents extrapolated from the description and anticipated outcomes that they expected to receive from coaching, even though coaching-related outcomes were not mentioned in the survey. Outcome category responses were coded inductively a second time, according to the subcategories evident among other Outcome responses. Noticeably different from Service subcategories, Outcome responses were organized into one or more of nine emergent subcategories, presented in Table 4. Performance improvement was the most frequently cited appealing outcome, followed by new perspective and learning. Feedback and self-reflection were other appealing outcomes of coaching that were anticipated. Some respondents also named specific goals that they might pursue via leadership coaching. Most predominantly, leaders anticipated that coaching might bring enhanced performance, new points of view, and opinions.
Table 4

**Appealing Outcome-related Subcategories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Improve performance, skills and leadership effectiveness</td>
<td>“I think anything that helps a leader to be more proficient is worthwhile.”</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>Get a fresh, new perspective on their work</td>
<td>“Being able to get a different viewpoint on situations that arise.”</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Learn something new</td>
<td>“Learning to solve problems proactively.”</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Collect feedback from coach and others</td>
<td>“I am always looking for feedback—positive or constructive.”</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Update on current trends, strategies and ideas</td>
<td>“Keeps you informed on current trends and issues.”</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Receive support via coaching</td>
<td>“My job is very isolating; I do not have a counterpart at other buildings/grade levels. I would feel freer to give details [to a coach] that might help me make a decision.”</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Engage in self reflection</td>
<td>“Coaching promotes being reflective and enables one to work out issues through their own faculties rather than being told what to do.”</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Goals</td>
<td>Reach specific professional goals</td>
<td>“Identifying my leadership style, trying other styles that I don’t naturally gravitate towards.”</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Benefits</td>
<td>Get help in general</td>
<td>“Potential help with myriad of situational leadership [needs].”</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second major, open-ended question (Unappealing) asked, “What if anything about leadership coaching does not appeal to you?” Of the 200 randomly sampled for the Appealing question, only 146 provided an answer to Unappealing, which was an inadequate number to conduct an analysis whose breadth would be comparable to that of the first question’s analysis. To increase the sample, an additional random sample of 50
were selected from the first group (from which 200 had been sampled originally) of those who responded appropriately to Appealing. Sampling 50 more responses resulted in an addition of 36 valid responses eligible for coding, resulting in a total of 184 responses to analyze for the Unappealing item. The methods for qualitative analysis do not specify an appropriate sample size, so resource restrictions and data manageability influenced the decision to analyze this number of responses. The frequency with which each major category was represented in the Unappealing item was very different from the frequency of categories in the Appealing item (see Figure 5). Far more Unappealing responses reflected opinions about the service than other categories, and the category of Other was more heavily represented.

![Figure 5. Primary response categories in the Unappealing item. Note: n = 184](image)

Survey respondents commented on a number of different Service-related elements of coaching they perceived to be less appealing. (See Table 5 for a brief summary and sample quotations.) Responses usually did not align with the structured code list created from the service definition; therefore, inductive coding was required to identify most of the Unappealing, Service-related subcategories. The most prominent concern was the

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11 Inappropriate and blank responses to the second question were ineligible for coding.
time needed to invest in the coaching process. Ambiguity concerning who would coach was the second most prominent subcategory of Unappealing comments. Other subcategories addressed concerns or questions about specific logistical aspects of coaching or its practicality in schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Investment of time</td>
<td>“Taking the time out of an already busy schedule.”</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider</td>
<td>Unknown coaching provider qualities</td>
<td>See additional table below for subcategories</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics</td>
<td>Logistics of implementing coaching</td>
<td>See additional table below for subcategories</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicality</td>
<td>Appropriateness of coaching model</td>
<td>“In most cases it appears geared toward the corporate or private world.”</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses in the Unappealing Service-related subcategories of Provider and Logistics were rather diverse. A third process of inductive coding was therefore conducted to reveal further details concerning collective opinions. Within the subcategory of Unappealing, Provider-related aspects of coaching service, many respondents expressed concern about the coach’s characteristics, as shown in Table 6. One concern was the coach’s qualifications, or how one is deemed a leadership coach. Additional concerns emerged regarding the coach’s experience and specific knowledge. Some believed that coaches should have experience working in schools, and others suggested that the coach possess insider knowledge about their specific school building.
Another area of concern was the potential for a bad interpersonal fit between coach and leader.

Table 6
Unappealing Service-related Service Provider Subcategories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Selection criteria to practice</td>
<td>“Who would be deemed a leadership coach?”</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Experience working in schools</td>
<td>“It needs to be someone familiar with the world of education.”</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit</td>
<td>Interpersonal fit with leader</td>
<td>“Our styles might not be the same.”</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Level of insider knowledge of specific school building</td>
<td>“An outsider might not understand the politics of the district.”</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Reason for coaching</td>
<td>“Skeptical of their motivation, particularly a private vendor.”</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Service-related subcategory of Logistics, some respondents provided more detail about the procedural elements that they perceived to be unappealing (see Table 7).

A closer look at the logistical concerns of respondents revealed that they were most worried about the cost of coaching, the confidentiality of their information, and the ongoing schedule of meetings. Other logistical concerns raised questions about the terms of engagement, and in particular, the mandatory and evaluative nature of the opportunity. Some concerns were outside the scope of the current study, so questions related to those aspects of leadership coaching were reasonable. Further implications of such concerns can be found in Chapter V, “Discussion.”
Table 7
*Unappealing Service-related Logistical Subcategories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Lack of funding</td>
<td>“I do not want to pay for it.”</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>Uncertainty of trust</td>
<td>“The person might share your information with others.”</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule</td>
<td>Consistent schedule</td>
<td>“Scheduled, ongoing coaching may add stress to my already packed workload.”</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms</td>
<td>Mandatory/evaluative nature</td>
<td>“It cannot be mandated or forced.”</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the very few Outcome-related responses to the Unappealing item, respondents speculated about some undesirable outcomes that might arise from leadership coaching, as shown in Table 8. Although no outcomes were presented in the survey’s introduction to the concept of leadership coaching services, some respondents mentioned punitive treatment as an unappealing outcome. Other respondent fears included receiving low-quality information, being stigmatized, or creating more work for themselves.

Table 8
*Unappealing Outcome-related Subcategories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Punishment</td>
<td>Punitive treatment</td>
<td>“That a person would be too hard on another.”</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Low-quality information</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stigma</td>
<td>Being negatively perceived</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Additional work</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: To protect confidentiality, sample quotations are not provided for groups with fewer than three respondents.*
In the last major category of Unappealing responses, leaders expressed uncertainty over the unappealing aspects of leadership coaching. As presented in Table 9, the most prominent theme among Other-related responses was “Nothing,” or that there were no areas of concern. A few respondents were unsure of their opinions about unappealing aspects of leadership coaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>No unappealing elements</td>
<td>“I believe it is a practical if not needed service.”</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Not sure of unappealing elements</td>
<td>“Need to know more details.”</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the final, open-ended question (Other Thoughts), educational leaders were asked for other thoughts they would like to share (n = 202). Given the smaller response rate for this item, all responses were analyzed and initial random sampling methods were not utilized. The item text was not linked to any previous portion of the survey, so responses addressed relatively random concepts, and open coding was conducted. On first review, two responses were not applicable to the topic of the survey and were removed from the sample, leaving a total of 200 valid responses. Phrases were first coded into high-level categories, which are presented in Figure 6. In the most prevalent of all categories, 21% of respondents indicated they did not have any further thoughts about leadership coaching. In another relatively large category of responses, leaders complimented the coaching model, research, project, or concept. A portion of educational leaders specified preferences or needs related to leadership coaching or professional
development, and others expressed a concern about coaching implementation or made a methodological suggestion. One point of interest was the 20% of respondents who shared autobiographical details about themselves, such as the nature of their past and present professional experiences.

Figure 6. Primary response categories in the Other Thoughts item. Note: n = 200

Samples of complimentary subcategory responses to Other Thoughts are presented in Table 10. Within the complimentary category, many leaders specifically complimented the leadership coaching model for its ability to benefit schools or school leaders. Respondents also praised coaching in general, calling the research, project, or concept a “good idea.” Some respondents generally felt leadership coaching was an “essential” development service. Specific aspects of leadership coaching services were also praised, such as the conversational content, the relational basis, and the unique perspective of a leadership coach.
Table 10
Complimentary Subcategories of Other Thoughts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Leadership coaching benefits schools or school leaders</td>
<td>“Leadership coaching provides worthwhile professional development and useful feedback for school leaders.”</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Idea</td>
<td>Complimented research, project or concept in general</td>
<td>“This is important research. I am glad to see it underway.”</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Talking, sharing is beneficial</td>
<td>“Thoughtful conversations about education are invaluable.”</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>Leadership coaching is essential</td>
<td>“Leadership coaching is essential for the success of a district and individual professional growth.”</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Coaching relationship is important</td>
<td>“Being able to have someone is priceless.”</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>External coaching perspective is important</td>
<td>“Sometimes only hearing educational ways to deal with people and situations is not as helpful as getting an ‘outside the box’ solution.”</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some survey respondents expressed coaching-related needs in Other Thoughts (see Table 11). Specific needs associated with coaching included unmet professional needs and preferences related to the service provider. A few requested leadership coaching services for themselves. Many of their specific needs substantiated opinions expressed in both Appealing and Unappealing items.
Table 11
*Subcategories of Coaching-related Needs in Other Thoughts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provider Characteristics</td>
<td>A provider with some type of experience, confidentiality, and positivity</td>
<td>“The person who does it needs to be a positive, optimistic, personable individual.”</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Professional help or assistance</td>
<td>“New administrators really need more support than most districts can offer.”</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Participation in leadership coaching</td>
<td>“I would like to work with a leadership coach.”</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Characteristics</td>
<td>Encouragement to move on and post-coaching and practical information</td>
<td>“We need to discuss how to work with less assistance from other professionals.”</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their Other Thoughts, some respondents provided a suggestion or expressed a concern about general coaching or the coaching model (see Table 12). Suggestions often focused on the methods of coaching and concerns primarily focused on external restrictions that could prevent the implementation of coaching. Leaders suggested various peer collaboration models and new technologies as alternatives to face-to-face interpersonal methods. Within the subcategory of restrictions, some educational leaders cited district and state travel limitations along with a tight budget as structures that would prevent them from seeking professional development outside their district.
Table 12
Subcategories of Concerns and Suggestions in Other Thoughts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Methodological suggestions (where, who, how)</td>
<td>“An on-line cohort of interested administrators might resolve time/distance issues.”</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions</td>
<td>Concerns about restrictions that could prevent implementation</td>
<td>“Out-of-district professional development with consultants or workshops is restricted on our tight budget.”</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Content suggestions (what)</td>
<td>“We need more interests focused on tech ed areas.”</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Concerns about underlying theories</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: To protect confidentiality, sample quotations are not provided for groups with fewer than three respondents.

In addition to contributing to the high-level themes in Other Thoughts, a number of individuals shared some comments that were not compliments, needs, suggestions, or concerns (see Table 13). A percentage of respondents took the opportunity to name and/or critique leadership programs they experienced: preparation programs, leadership development programs, alternative certification programs, and mentoring programs. Others criticized an item or items in the survey, particularly those with forced-choice design. Some leaders conveyed personal values that aligned with the values of leadership coaching, specifically the importance of growth, development, or learning.
Table 13
*Other Subcategories of Other Thoughts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>Named and sometimes criticized preexisting programs (preparation, leadership development, alternative certification)</td>
<td>“The mentoring for new principals should be evaluated. It is structured more as a course then as an avenue for support.”</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Critique</td>
<td>Survey item feedback or critique</td>
<td>“Some of the survey questions forced me to answer with one choice.”</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Interested to hear the findings</td>
<td>“Well-prepared survey—looking forward to feedback.”</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist</td>
<td>Interested in helping somehow</td>
<td>“I would like to put this together for NJ administrators.”</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Endorsed related values (growth, development, learning)</td>
<td>“I monitor my own leadership style, study other education administrators, and examine business styles—I continually want to develop my skills.”</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Abstract statements, usually regarding leadership</td>
<td>“Everything rises and falls on leadership.”</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No need</td>
<td>Model is redundant</td>
<td>“My development group seems like it is already meeting the leadership coaching need for new administrators.”</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

With a definition based on executive coaching models developed in business settings, the leadership coaching model introduced a new model of personalized professional development designed to meet leadership needs commonly shared by leaders or executives in all types of organizations. Across all demographic subgroups, quantitative data indicated that professional development is a personal priority for these experienced leaders. A wide majority of the sample reported that they think about
professional development on a regular basis and elect to engage in professional
development opportunities for themselves. Information about professional development
opportunities is readily available in multiple forms; they learn of professional
development in many different ways and via many different sources.

Open-ended survey responses revealed more about respondents’ complex feelings
toward this new type of professional development. Overall, results indicated that
educational leaders in New Jersey were interested in the major benefits of leadership
coaching and concerned about some its procedural aspects. Respondents highlighted the
general value of the opportunity, specified beneficial elements of the development
service, and predicted some valuable outcomes they might achieve from a coaching
engagement. In their criticism, respondents identified areas of concern within the terms
and conditions of the engagement, and most notably, with regard to the time it might
require. Most educational leaders were interested in learning more, if not actually
pursuing leadership coaching services.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Abstract

The investigation revealed that educational leaders are potentially very interested and receptive to what some call executive coaching, but some logistical issues need to be addressed. Some aspects of personalized professional development that educational leaders found appealing, such as the relational platform, personal service provider, and conversational content of the service are not currently available via traditional professional development opportunities. Although generally positive, not all comments from leaders expressed openness toward the model. In criticism, respondents asked clarifying questions and raised concerns about the implementation of leadership coaching. This chapter discusses leaders’ praise and criticism for leadership coaching and explores the implications for future practice of and research into personalized professional development for educational leaders.

Interest in Coaching

In brief, leaders perceived leadership coaching as a novel and potentially valuable opportunity. All demographic markets of school leaders demonstrated an approximately similar level of interest in learning more about or pursuing leadership coaching services, which suggested that in general, this model was equally desirable across all represented
groups of school leaders. Descriptions of the appealing aspects of leadership coaching were often phrased in terms of “a chance/opportunity/ability to…,” reflecting a positive perception of the services. These comments confirmed the results of the quantitative analysis, which showed almost all respondents felt leadership coaching applied to their not-for-profit setting, with 60% interested in learning more, and 52% interested in actually pursuing services. Their responses also reflected a perceived lack of leadership coaching services, which has been confirmed here through a review of the literature.

Appealing Personalized Aspects

Respondents were most positive about service-related aspects of the coaching model that were unique to the personalized approach to professional development, such as the conversational content, personal service provider, and relational platform. All of these methods align with other personalized development opportunities (including mentoring and peer consultation), but stand in contrast to more traditional, “one-shot” forms of professional development for school leaders. In such scenarios, learning may take place in a classroom setting and providers may be present only for the time required to conduct a class or workshop for multiple leaders. Despite a multitude of traditional options and the power to make their own professional development decisions, almost all respondents reported seeking personalized, job-related assistance from various people located both in and out of the workplace (friends, family members, peers, and immediate supervisors). Given that respondents frequently identified personalized attributes of coaching services as "appealing" qualities in their responses, combined with the tendency to seek personalized assistance informally, suggests that school leaders have an interest in developmental methods not currently available to them through customary venues.
While business literature has substantially recorded the widespread use and benefit of individualized executive coaching in other contexts (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Joo, 2005; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001), literature confirms that formal, personalized, professional development is a relatively new method for many school leaders. Only a few formal opportunities have emerged in response to education literature’s call for a more individualized, ongoing, job-embedded approach to professional development (Peterson, 2002). Given the apparent misalignment between desired and available development opportunities, in future practice, more personalized opportunities could be designed and provided through traditional outlets.

Respondents highlighted some interesting service-related aspects of the leadership coaching model. Some liked the possibility of customizing their own development goals rather than being driven by others’ or by a “one-size-fits-all” approach. Other respondents appreciated the application of an organizational framework to professional development, and emphasized that such theory was a relevant outside perspective missing from current practice. These particular service-related methodological aspects of leadership coaching seem to be especially rare among development opportunities designed for educational leaders.

Current personalized development practices in education seem to limit flexibility and omit an organizational perspective. For example, many coaching models developed in and for the field of education, including those reviewed earlier, consistently expect leaders to set *instructional* goals, which restrict development efforts to instructional outcomes such as improving student achievement. Limited flexibility prevents development goals aimed at individual outcomes such as improving leadership. Very few
authors have emphasized the importance of applying alternative but complementary perspectives emerging from research in other fields (e.g., organization development and adult learning theories) to the creation of new professional development models for educators (Helsing, Howell, Kegan & Lahey, 2008; Owens, 2001). Business settings, in contrast, have begun to identify the importance of context in professional development. Contextual factors such as the organization’s culture, business demands, and social networks, constitute the most influential variables among the “active ingredients” of personalized intervention for some executive coaches (McKenna & Davis, 2010).

Future applications of personalized methods might attempt to utilize an organizational framework to design development opportunities and broaden the flexibility of development goals for educational leaders. Future research could seek to clarify how educational leaders may derive benefit from these and other service-related aspects of personalized professional development.

Professional Service Providers

Another aspect of professional development that differentiates personalized opportunities from more traditional classroom- or workshop-based development opportunities is the personal service provider. The role of the personal service provider was a prominent topic of interest for many responding school leaders. Nearly 30% found the provider to be appealing and 25% questioned the service provider in some manner. The survey’s description of leadership coaches was deliberately brief, allowing respondents the latitude to express their personal preferences regarding different dimensions of the coach’s role and in varying levels of detail. In terms of their current
behaviors, at the most general level, the source of their personal job-related assistance varied. Most leaders looked for help within their own districts, while 21% consulted with individuals external to the school system. Some leaders felt external providers who were objective and nonjudgmental would deliver unbiased and nonthreatening services.

The benefit of the service provider’s objectivity is supported to some extent by research conducted in the realms of both business and education. Management research suggests professional coaches operating from an external perspective offer a service that is impossible to achieve from inside an organizational system (Evered & Selman, 1989). One study compares MBA candidates’ preferences for different sources of coaching, and results indicate that participants preferred the consultation of external coaches because they were perceived to be more credible than peer coaches (Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004). Hall, Otazo & Hollenbeck (1999) studied executives in coaching relationships and reported that internal coaches jeopardized confidentiality, one of the most important conditions of the coaching relationship. The blended coaching model of coaching in education (Bloom, Castagna, Moir & Warren, 2005) confirms the importance of having an external coach with an objective perspective, even in conjunction with services from an internal provider.

Beyond the coach’s internal or external point of origin, a more detailed distinction can be drawn between preferences for different types of consultation. Respondents’ opinions and behaviors communicated tendencies to pursue help from alternative personal providers. They most frequently consulted with other educational leaders, while coaches were the most infrequently consulted. The helpfulness of assistance educational leaders reportedly received from alternative sources both inside and outside the school
system left some room for improvement. The most helpful assistance was provided by coaches, while friends provided the least helpful assistance. Peers and family members were rated equally helpful. Alternative, personalized sources for professional development were not maximally helpful, yet respondents regularly sought informal consultation from them. Novel attributes of personalized services may help explain the tendency of most school leaders to pursue personalized professional consultation outside traditional professional development parameters, regardless of the lower level of helpfulness they perceived from those sources. Additional research could investigate positive attributes that have already been identified as well as those that may not yet be clear.

Coach Qualifications

In addition to the provider types and their general points of origin, 20% of respondents commented at the finest level of detail about providers: the professional qualifications of leadership coaches, and particularly their educational and professional experience. Doubts about the provider were usually expressed as questions about the leadership coach’s qualifications. Respondents requested such a range of different backgrounds that they cannot be condensed into a single profile of an ideal service provider. At one extreme, leaders expressed interest in coaches with school experience at a specific level, while at the other extreme, leaders were interested in the unbiased perspective of coaches with no school affiliation. Similarly, in terms of knowledge, some leaders requested that potential coaches have intimate knowledge of the “the day-to-day running of the building,” while other leaders requested potential coaches be “familiar with the world of education” more generally.
Disagreement over the ideal coach mirrors, to some extent, the diverse personalized service providers available to educational leaders, all of whom have different preexisting relationships with the school leader, offer assistance to serve varying purposes, and boast diverse benefits from their specialized services. Most current models for school leaders utilize the mentoring or peer consulting framework, in which providers have different levels of experience in the same system as the leaders, and the focus is on creating solutions to professional problems. The literature has demonstrated that mentors are assumed to have extensive experience to share, and can assist with the induction of new principals. Peers are assumed to have unique experiences that can help other leaders build community, reduce isolation, or find creative solutions to common problems. Respondents who requested coaches with a degree of knowledge or experience in their specific field of practice may have needs better suited for peer or mentoring relationships—in which case, a body of practical knowledge may help to resolve their technical, field-specific challenges.

A review of coaching practices in schools concludes that it is important for coaches to maintain objectivity in their work (Brown, Stroh, Fouts & Baker, 2005). Sharing a context and political environment may facilitate some types of development, but when the service provider comes from a job-alike position, the internal relationship involves some degree of bias. Evaluations of mentoring and peer coaching programs confirm that sharing similar experiences can lead some service providers to rely on inappropriate or ineffective assumptions about the best course of action for clients to pursue, especially if the area of desired development falls outside his or her experience.
Future practice might consider that some leaders may benefit from the external perspective of providers with no vested interest in the system.

**Coaching Relationship**

Some respondents mentioned the importance of the coaching relationship in the development process. The quality of the professional partnership was a concern for those, who worried that the coach might prevent a natural interpersonal fit. Trustworthiness was an associated appealing characteristic of the service provider; leaders wanted a trusting and respectful development relationship in which they might “feel freer to give details that [they] might not share with colleagues.”

Leaders’ emphasis on the quality of the relationship with their coach is confirmed by business literature that summarizes it as the second most important “active ingredient” that facilitates successful executive coaching engagements (McKenna & Davis, 2009), behind contextual factors. Rogers (1957/1992) also argues for the importance of the interpersonal alliance in facilitating personal growth and change, regardless of the provider’s methods or the professional setting of the relationship. A durable, collaborative alliance is crucial to the success of almost any individualized intervention in which an interpersonal relationship is the central method for development, as is the case in personalized professional development activities. Likewise, inappropriate matches were a concern with respect to many personalized professional development methods in education (Gray, Fry, Bottoms & O’Neill, 2007; Silver, Lochmiller, Copland & Tripps, 2008; Wallace Foundation, 2008). School leaders might feel freer to share with a coach who originates outside the district, who withholds judgment, and who provides a safe outlet for professional concerns. This perspective is substantiated in business literature
(Coutu & Kauffman, 2009). As suggested by some survey respondents, school leaders may not perceive within-district development opportunities or those offered by district employees to be safe, confidential activities. The threat of evaluation may prevent full personal engagement and limit collaboration, and ultimately inhibit developmental return. Confidential coaching services create a safe relationship in which sensitive but vital conversations can take place.

The challenge of identifying a qualified coach and ensuring coach credibility may be rooted in the dual nature of coaching services: they are both personalized and professional. While coaching services work on an individual level, and cater to the personal needs of clients, they also serve the professional context and broader goals at the organizational level. Future research should continue to identify which service provider characteristics best suit different developmental needs for educational leaders. Researchers should seek to examine both the preferences of educational leaders as well as preferable characteristics indicated by the nature of their professional needs. Variable responses in the current study suggest the characteristics implicated by these two perspectives may not necessarily align with one another.

Conditions and Outcomes

In addition to the service-related aspects of leadership coaching (furnishing of a service provider, flexibility, organizational framework), survey respondents also questioned the terms and conditions of coaching and predicted potential outcomes of the services. These comments are predicated on a certain amount of assumption, since the current study did not offer details about the logistics or outcomes of leadership coaching.
This introductory investigation instead targeted the general interest in personal leadership development and collective opinions concerning the leadership coaching model. Logistical details such as the cost of the service and eventual outcomes (which are contingent upon each coach-coachee pair and the school context) were omitted from the brief coaching description. However, the fact that in their responses, school leaders questioned the terms of leadership coaching in such detail suggests that they were seriously considering how such services might apply to and affect their professional lives.

**Outcomes**

School leaders were excited about what coaching might offer, and predicted general outcomes such as performance improvement, a fresh perspective, and professional support, as well as more tangible outcomes such as new learning, receipt of quality feedback, and the opportunity to engage in self-reflection. Occasionally, potential negative outcomes were mentioned, including punishment, poor information, stigmatization, and additional work.

The positive expectations held by educational leaders did not differ greatly from the actual outcomes reported by executive coaching clients in other sectors. One major study of executive coaching literature, for example, reveals agreement on a number of positive outcomes such as increased self-awareness and self-esteem, and improved communication with peers and direct reports (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001) which are similar to the outcomes anticipated by the educational leaders in the present study.

It is worth noting that the novelty of coaching in the context of education could leave it open to stigmatization. Studies show that in the business world, those who seek coaching services were once subject to negative perceptions, although businesses now
seek continuous, job-embedded executive coaching services in order to develop high-performing leaders (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009). As the practice has expanded across contexts and over time, the perception of coaching has shifted from a service for ineffective managers to a valuable support for high-ranking leaders. It would be useful for future research to investigate the actual outcomes of leadership coaching for educational leaders as well as the impressions of their peers regarding the effectiveness of and reasons for seeking such services

**Conditions**

A few respondents were concerned about the terms and conditions of coaching engagements, such as the boundaries of confidentiality, grounds of participation (evaluative or mandatory), and the cost of the engagement. The comments that leaders made concerning these logistical details suggest that the terms of the leadership model should be communicated clearly to educational leaders in future practice. Consumers of coaching services should ask potential providers to outline the terms of the engagement early in the process. Service providers must be prepared to address questions about the terms and conditions of coaching, including issues of voluntariness, confidentiality, and the ramifications of these conditions during each stage of the process. Interested readers can refer to Orenstein (2007) for an example of coaching terms and conditions.

**Time and Scheduling**

By far, the most prominent theme of all open-ended responses (positive or negative) was leaders’ concern about the time needed for coaching. Forty percent of educational leaders commented that spending or scheduling an hour might be
challenging, given their very limited time during the week. For 33%, time was the only unappealing aspect they noted. On the other hand, two-thirds of educational leaders responded, “Yes,” when asked if they could foresee dedicating one hour per week to discuss work-related issues. The specific use of a principal’s time may be an important consideration because respondents reacted strongly to the stipulation of one hour per week, but they were more open to spending an hour per week when the time was described as “dedicated.” These conflicting messages suggest school leaders may be willing to spend the time, but their ability to find time and keep appointments might be limited.

While other coaching-related concerns (coach qualifications, coaching terms and conditions) can be confirmed to different degrees by literature from other fields in which coaching is already prevalent, the issue of time seems to be a uniquely substantial concern for these leaders in the field of education. Popular education publications echo that limited time is a concern for different types of coaches who work in school settings (Reiss, 2007) and for various education settings that attempt to adopt coaching practices (Silver, Lochmiller, Copland & Tripps, 2009; Turnbull et al., 2009). However, literature from other fields reviewed for this investigation did not identify or address concerns about time among coaches, coachees or organizations that utilize executive coaching services.

Spending time with a coach may be an especially difficult challenge for the 23% of survey respondents who reportedly lead alone. Without support from an assistant or alternate administrator, educational leaders may not be available to focus on their own needs during the school day. In this way, organizational resources are structured such that
school leaders are an irreplaceable necessity for schools, and one hour of coaching may be difficult to arrange. The current system allows time for traditional forms of professional development, but may not permit innovative activities. Today’s educators may possess more contemporary values regarding job-embedded professional development, but in their current context, they may not have the flexibility to engage in novel, self-directed professional learning.

The scarcity of time impacts educational leaders’ participation in many activities, not just leadership coaching. Some researchers in education have actively pursued options to relieve the pressure. There are multiple emergent strategies for improving the principal’s situation, such as redesigning the role of school leadership, diversifying the routes to educational leadership certification, and promoting principal professional learning (Portin, Alejano, Knapp & Marzolf, 2006; Turnbull et al., 2009). Although some strategies seem to be promising, best practices have not yet been identified.

Suggestions for Practice

The context of professional development for school leaders is beginning to welcome formal methods of personalized, professional development, but current professional development opportunities have not fully taken into account new job responsibilities and contextual needs. Positive survey responses suggest personalized coaching opportunities for educational leaders may be a valuable addition to traditional development methods. The concerns of educational leaders surveyed in this study might help design future coaching opportunities. Providers of coaching services should clarify the differences between personalized development opportunities for themselves and
consumers. Care should be taken to ensure the educational leader’s goals align with the scope of the service and the capabilities of the service provider. Prior to the engagement, coaching providers should also clarify the terms and conditions of coaching, which may be less familiar to educational leaders unaccustomed to the interpersonal basis for development. Development partners (coach and coachee) should consider the issue of time prior to coaching. Ascertaining in advance how the coachee’s system will provide time in support of their coaching may help avoid predictable challenges. Together, providers and educational leaders might seek to redefine the notion of “professional development” in the context of education to render coaching services more acceptable.

Summary

Leaders expressed mixed feelings about aspects of leadership coaching: they were interested in some elements of the model, but practical concerns may need to be addressed in the creation of new, more personalized methods of professional development. Similar to other leaders, educational leaders found leadership coaching to be attractive for some of its personalized attributes. Survey respondents questioned coaches’ qualifications—a common concern in other coaching contexts—and the terms of coaching, which indicated they envisioned working with a coach. Time was the most substantial concern among survey respondents, which appears to be unique to the context of education. The synthesis in this chapter laid the groundwork for future research on coaching and other personalized development options for educational leaders.
There may be a place for leadership coaching among other professional
development opportunities for educational leaders, particularly in the more recent canon
of personalized professional development. New models, new providers, or new contexts
for professional development are needed to support the “new skill sets and a new
orientation to educational leadership” (Bossi, 2009, p. 27). The findings discussed in the
preceding chapter indicated some implications for future research and practice based on
the opinions of New Jersey education leaders, with reference to popular and empirical
literature on professional development for school leaders. Taken together, these sources
expose two areas of contention in the professional context of educational leadership: first,
the scope of what constitutes coaching, and second, the seemingly dual nature of
educational leadership. This chapter explores these two areas and presents some practical
situations in which leadership coaching might benefit educational leaders. Finally, some
limitations of the current investigation are discussed, followed by the investigator’s
personal reflection on the process of conducting this research.
Techniques vs. Practice of Coaching

Perhaps even more so than executive coaching in the business world, leadership coaching in education lacks a clear definition. As has been shown, diverse usage of the word “coaching” in professional practice reveals a significant area of confusion around the scope of the term, whether it refers to a set of techniques or a cohesive practice. A distinction must therefore be made between coaching techniques (the tools) and coaching services (the trade). Tools are of course important to practice the trade successfully, but isolated tools should not be considered adequate replacements for the comprehensive trade. While a good coach utilizes multiple techniques (active listening, reflecting, questioning, challenging), the application of those techniques should fit closely together within a broad theoretical framework for creating behavioral change. In future research and practice, the application of isolated coaching techniques should be distinguished from the professional practice of coaching within a comprehensive theoretical framework.

Leadership coaching may be a valuable or even “essential” development opportunity according to some respondents, but not all school leaders are ideal candidates for this model of professional development. Traditional development opportunities, other personalized services such as peer coaching and mentoring, or even technical consultation—including literacy or capacity coaching—might better meet the needs of certain educational leaders. In future research, the distinct benefit of leadership coaching needs to be differentiated from other personalized forms of professional development. Likewise, future practice should clearly distinguish between various forms of personalized professional development services, and additional research could compare their effectiveness.
Managerial vs. Instructional Leadership Role

Another notable area of confusion revealed in this study of the application of coaching to educational leadership was the conceptualization of the school leader’s role. Some have described the job of leading a school as shifting from manager to instructional leader (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005), but in practice, the role often expands in tandem with our ever-increasing understanding of an effective education system. Educational leadership now necessitates a multiplicity of competence in education and leadership, which for some may entail a reprioritization of core responsibilities. School leaders, developers of school leaders, and the ISLLC standards seem to distinguish between two types of leadership responsibilities: instructional and managerial (administrative, non-instructional), which suggests that the school leadership role could be filled by separate specialists. However, dividing instructional and managerial duties may not address the issue, because the division is hard to define and the two types of duties are not necessarily mutually exclusive: effective school leadership requires both leadership and management (Owens, 2001).

Wise & Jacobo (2010) recently reframed the divided “instruction versus management” perceptions of the principal’s role in their outline of a “general roadmap of the journey to transformation and sustainability” (p. 167) via coaching. Taking a more integrative perspective, they argued that issues often viewed as routine “management” functions presented important opportunities to affect the system. A leader’s personal approach to seemingly mundane management decisions impacted human capital in ways that educational leaders may not have acknowledged. For example:
Resistance will confront the high school principal who reassigns the best teachers to the lowest performing students, who modifies the schedule so that underperforming subgroups are placed in courses that challenge them, [or] who plans the schedule based not on teacher wishes, but on the needs of students (p. 165).

Leadership coaching could help leaders navigate these important decisions and potentially demonstrate a new, more effective way of operating.

*Scenarios in which Leadership Coaching Might Apply*

Based on this advanced perspective, there are some practical cases in which leadership coaching might assist new and more experienced educational leaders (Wilkes & Telfair, 2008; Wise & Jacobo, 2010).

- A strong individual contributor struggles with the interpersonal and communications skills needed to work well with colleagues
- A recently promoted individual has been successful as a teacher, but has never been in a leadership role before
- A school leader needs to change focus and methods to align with the direction and style of a new direct supervisor
- A school leader changes the format of staff meetings to professional development sessions, and all operational issues are communicated via memos or emails rather than at staff meetings
- A school leader meets with ineffective teachers, puts them on individual improvement plans, and provides feedback to teachers
- A principal asks staff to devise plans for improving student learning and provides resources and time for the planning
Wise and Jacobo (2010) suggest that the impact of coaching on schools could be powerful in theory, but they stop short of endorsing any model until more practical research is conducted to elucidate and explain the most helpful aspects of coaching. The present study offers some ideas in response to their call for additional research. The actual effectiveness and potential benefit of the above coaching applications of course warrants further research. To this end, researchers might begin by investigating helpful aspects of personalized versus traditional professional development. Leaders continue to pursue alternative job-related assistance because they benefit from the personalized context in ways they cannot benefit from traditional professional development activities. Further investigations could explore the beneficial aspects that distinguish methods of personalized development from each other. Leadership coaching services could fill multiple niches left unaddressed by other personalized professional development opportunities for school leaders. Complex, open-ended feedback suggests that each administrator has unique professional needs, goals, and preferences. Future research should investigate which needs are currently unmet by other development programs—particularly needs related to human factors, and others which are commonly shared by all leaders.

The recent interest in schools operating as professional learning communities (PLCs) is one example in which reform efforts attempt to transform schools into more collaborative contexts (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2006). Widely popularized in the last decade, PLCs bring educators together as a community; educators work interdependently, discuss student work, and coordinate their efforts to improve learning for all. For groups of educators, the concept of PLCs involves learning in the context of
taking action and a commitment to continuous improvement. Enacting these tenets creates “a powerful new way of working together” for educators and educational leaders (DuFour, 2004, p. 11). As a result, adults are required to interact with each other in novel ways. In practice, the innovative, more professionalized context of collaboration introduces new expectations in educational systems paired with additional responsibilities for educators. Efforts to develop communities of leaders or communities of learning change the fundamental way that schools function, yet existing professional development options may inadequately support components of this change process. Creating a more interactive, person-focused school organization could create the need for external leadership coaching among school leaders responsible for leading the charge. Leaders and school systems may need additional preparation or ongoing personal support during the organizational transformation from a culture of isolation to a culture of collaboration.

Personalized professional development in general, but leadership coaching in particular, constitutes a novel type of learning and development for education systems. It is not about training leaders in techniques or educating leaders about theories. Books, guides, exercises, tools, and techniques all hearken back to schools’ familiar response to challenges: teach and learn to solve problems. Coaching is a wholly different mechanism for change, which is more conducive to meeting adaptive rather than technical challenges in school systems.

Coaching has been very successful for the business world. Executive, leadership, transitional, and developmental coaching services have improved everything from executive management and employee performance to the bottom line. Yet the services currently available to educational leaders are limited to variations of peer-to-peer
coaching, technical consulting, or mentoring. While peer and mentor relationships certainly have their merits, these insular methods for development are limited in their objectivity and reliance on these methods can potentially lead to counterproductive leadership styles (Owens, 2001). An empathic practitioner who operates outside the context of education can offer a more objective perspective and different type of development than a provider with years of experience in education. When governed by multiple organizational theories, leadership coaching can support individual development in concert with organizational change, rather than in spite of, in opposition to, or in the name of the organization. Given the success of numerous business models targeting the professional needs of executives in the private sector, it stands to reason that today’s educational leaders—and as a result, today’s students—are poised to benefit from well-defined coaching services. Leaders appear to be interested in leadership coaching and ready for a change, but it remains to be seen whether education is ready, willing, or able to adapt its definition of professional development.

Limitations

There are a few limitations on the current investigation that may have influenced the results and conclusions. Sampling members of a professional organization using an online survey may have influenced findings by limiting the responding population. More of those interested in NJPSA and/or professional development opportunities may have tended to open the invitation and complete the survey. This data collection method could have favored leaders savvy with technology or those open to the idea of coaching, which may have restricted the scope of generalizability or overestimated interest in coaching.
The brief description of coaching included in the survey did not adequately account for the complex nature of this professional development method. While the survey helped capture an immediate response to the model’s basic characteristics, a survey is limited in its ability to convey the nuances of this development model sufficiently for respondents to develop an opinion. In addition, the forced-choice survey items may not have accounted for some leaders’ group memberships. Some specificity within the population may have been sacrificed as a result. In the future, personal interviews following actual implementation of the service might better inform leaders to share opinions that account for the service’s complexity.

Conducting a survey during the school year may have prevented all types of school administrators from participating, particularly the relatively underrepresented vice or assistant principals. Time restrictions named in the survey as a barrier to engaging in additional professional development are also likely to have prevented some from completing this survey. In the absence of more desirable incentives, the online survey was vulnerable to perceptions that it constituted additional work unrelated to the school leader’s daily objectives.

**Personal Reflection**

The influence of the author’s personal history and group memberships should not be underestimated. The author’s perspective was influenced by an education in applied organizational psychology with a specific interest in schools as organizations. This interest developed out of personal experience with the dynamics of school systems encountered as a child growing up under the care of two public high school teachers and many friends and relatives who also filled roles in the education system. The perspective
of intergroup conflict among all ecological levels of education precipitated an unwavering empathy for and commitment to the education system and its stakeholders. Pursuing a professional degree in applied, organizational psychology with a specific interest in working with schools allowed the researcher many opportunities to consult with individuals and systems of education. This personal experience has suggested that schools could benefit from organizational interventions, but that a perception of these approaches as "external" detracted from more immediate reception in educational systems.

A great deal of emotion has gone into this work, some for the better, and some that distracted from the task at hand. Many hours were spent cutting, inserting, and editing the content and coding survey responses in order to conduct and present the most objective research possible. Undertaking an investigation of this magnitude in relative isolation likely biased the interpretation of results and development of implications in ways both known and unknown. In the future, the author will pursue—and recommends that other consultants who wish to conduct studies of organizations—pursue work in groups whenever possible. Nonetheless, results of the current investigation were calculated and presented with as much care and objectivity as possible.

Summary

This exploratory study attempted to understand how a professional development service designed for business settings might be valuable to leaders in the education field. School leaders’ complimentary and critical responses to leadership coaching, considered alongside studies of executive coaching and coaching in the field of education, helped
clarify the potential role of leadership coaching in the organizational context of education. The final chapter presented some supplementary areas in which future research may continue to develop an understanding of how leadership coaching can help educational leaders. It offered a clarification with regard to coaching as a practice or a technique and a distinction between instructional and managerial leadership in education systems. Applied cases in which leadership coaching might be beneficial for educational leaders were also presented, such as implementing PLCs, which may precipitate challenges for educational leaders commonly shared by all system leaders. Finally, some limitations and the author’s personal reflection helped to put the investigation, its results, and suggested implications into perspective.
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APPENDIX A

Procedural Steps in a Sample Executive Coaching Engagement

There are a number of general, procedural steps commonly associated with many models of executive coaching. The following description of a sample procedure can illustrate the experience for providers and consumers.\(^{12}\) The process begins with entry into the system; the coach meets with the requesting individual (if not the target leader) to evaluate the appropriateness of executive coaching for their particular purpose. If appropriate, the coach meets with the leader for an initial consultation where they discuss the coaching framework, expectations, and some logistics. Clients\(^ {13}\) must be willing participants in the coaching process; they see a need for one-on-one professional development and ongoing support in their daily operations. If a relationship is believed to be worthwhile and feasible, the coach creates a contract for the coaching engagement. The contract covers the duration of the relationship, components of the work, compensation for services rendered, the boundaries of confidentiality, and general expectations for participation. The coach then begins the 360° interview process and requests a list of 12 – 15 individuals who can be interviewed on their perceptions of the client. The leader provides each interviewee’s name, position, organizational relationship (if not obvious), and contact information. Before the second meeting, the coach and client exchange the contract and interviewee list.

At the second meeting the contract is reviewed and amended or signed, specific needs of the principal are addressed, potential coaching goals are identified, and the list

\(^{12}\) The current description is inspired by Orenstein’s (2007) multidimensional executive coaching model.

\(^{13}\) Coachee, leader, and client are all synonymous in the description.
of interviewees is discussed. The list is edited to represent a diverse group of people along all possible dimensions. A wide range of stakeholders within the system (employees, assistants, support staff, peers, supervisor(s), etc.) who hold a range of positive and negative opinions is necessary to create the conditions for valid and reliable feedback collection. The goal is to help the leader and coach develop a shared understanding of the collective perceptions in the system. A representative group should provide constructive feedback for the leader to use in order to set appropriate goals for coaching.

The leader’s current needs should inform potential coaching objectives, although actual objectives are finalized after they receive the 360° feedback. Once the coach and coachee agree on some initial objectives, the leader arranges a meeting with the coach and his or her direct manager. At this meeting, the client and his or her direct supervisor are given an opportunity to discuss the coaching process and the preliminary objectives. The manager is given an opportunity to share his or her opinion on the potential objectives, and the coach is able to observe the pair interact with one another. This is important to gain buy-in from the manager who will ideally support the leader’s development after the coaching relationship is terminated. Boundaries of confidentiality and expected deliverables are also discussed until the three reach agreement. Goals can be shared with the supervisor, but most coaching information, including individual session content and the final evaluation are held in strict confidence by the coach. The leader may share information directly with others at their own discretion. Without agreement on these optimal conditions, the coach may not proceed with the engagement because the expectation of trust is very important in the coaching relationship.
The next step is for the coach to conduct confidential and anonymous 360° interviews with each selected interviewee on the coachee’s diverse list. The client is responsible for asking interviewees for their participation and explaining why they are being asked to speak with the coach and what is involved with their participation. The confidential and voluntary nature of participation must be communicated now and at the beginning of each interview. The coach’s role is to contact each interviewee to schedule an interview. To stay on schedule, all interviews should be completed within a two-week time period.

Once interviews are completed, the coach spends one to two weeks preparing a feedback report summarizing themes of the 360° interviews. First each interview is transcribed and responses to each question are combined with other responses to prepare for data analysis. Once data are combined, they are cleaned of any identifying information and reviewed for common themes. The major themes are identified and quotes supporting each theme are then bulleted and organized into a brief document for presentation to the client. Feedback delivery takes place orally in a two-hour meeting to allow for time for the leader to hear and process the personal, potentially sensitive information. A hard copy of the feedback is sent to the leader via email in a password-protected file (if desired) after edits are made following the oral delivery. The client uses the next week to review the feedback report and mark areas of agreement, disagreement, confusion, and potential areas to target in coaching.

The next session begins with a discussion of the feedback report after allowing the leader some time to process and think critically about the results of the interviews. Any of the client’s questions, personal reactions and concerns stemming from specific
feedback themes or supporting quotations are addressed. Objective setting begins during this session with a discussion of the areas flagged as potential objectives. Once these objectives are identified, another meeting with the coachee’s direct supervisor is scheduled. The second three-way meeting format is identical to the first. The leader and his or her manager are given time to discuss the newly revised objectives for coaching. The coach once again has an opportunity to observe the leader and direct supervisor interact with each other. Ideally, agreement is reached, and coaching begins at the next session.

Face-to-face coaching sessions last for approximately four to six months, depending on the leader’s need. Initial sessions should revisit the objectives and determine what form success will take. Each session loosely follows a similar agenda. Sessions begin with a short “coming together” where coach and client reorient and become comfortable with one another again. If the client does not automatically begin a work-related conversation, the coach may ask the leader about the past week. This provides an opening for the leader to address a particular leadership emergency, recount the results of any homework assignments that were completed during the past week, or take the conversation in an entirely different direction. The coach must never direct conversation in a coaching session. In the first case, the emergency situation is given priority until the leader feels comfortable enough to discuss another topic. Repeated circumvention of homework over the course of multiple sessions may warrant an observation from coach to client. If homework is avoided over multiple sessions and progress is thwarted, the coach might bring the impact of this fact to the coachee’s attention for reflection. Any feedback from the coach should be limited and come from
an empathic perspective. Questions or observations should be communicated rather than judgments. Evaluative statements are inappropriate in the context of the coaching relationship. The leader’s original objectives may be revisited occasionally to be sure efforts are focused in the right direction. In-person coaching sessions are important to fully consider the organization into the coaching process. Sessions repeat on a weekly basis until both the coach and the client agree that the objectives are met. At this point, termination slowly takes place, and coaching sessions come to an end.

The final step in the coaching process is an evaluation of progress six months after the termination of formal coaching. Once the leader’s new behaviors become more or less a part of their professional life, coworkers are asked to compare the coachee’s new behavior to their old behavior. This can be approached in one of two ways. The 360° interview process can be repeated for a more thorough analysis of the nature of change. While richer in its results, this option can be time-consuming once coaching concludes and the relationship is no longer active. Alternatively, an empathic organic questionnaire can be administered to many of the leader’s coworkers. The questionnaire asks coworkers of the coachee to reflect on items relevant to coaching goals. The same survey is completed twice in one sitting: one version is written in past tense in terms of behaviors demonstrated prior to coaching (one year before), and one version is written in present tense in terms of the leader’s current behaviors after coaching. Items fall into one of three categories: directly related to coaching objectives, somewhat related to coaching objectives, and completely unrelated to coaching objectives. Each item is analyzed using a paired t-test wherein old behavior scores are compared to new behavior scores. To demonstrate that coaching was effective, the coach looks for the most significant
behavioral improvement across time in the group of items measuring behaviors directly targeted in the coaching objectives. Results are shared with the coachee only, and the official coaching contract is closed.
## APPENDIX B

Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008

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</table>
| **Standard 1:** An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders. | A. Collaboratively develop and implement a shared vision and mission  
B. Collect and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning  
C. Create and implement plans to achieve goals  
D. Promote continuous and sustainable improvement  
E. Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans |
| **Standard 2:** An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. | A. Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations  
B. Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program  
C. Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students  
D. Supervise instruction  
E. Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress  
F. Develop the instructional and leadership capacity of staff  
G. Maximize time spent on quality instruction  
H. Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning  
I. Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program |
| **Standard 3:** An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. | A. Monitor and evaluate the management and operational systems  
B. Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and technological resources  
C. Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff  
D. Develop the capacity for distributed leadership  
E. Ensure teacher and organizational time is focused to support quality instruction and student learning |
| **Standard 4:** An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources. | A. Collect and analyze data and information pertinent to the educational environment  
B. Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community’s diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources  
C. Build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers  
D. Build and sustain productive relationships with community partners |
|---|---|
| **Standard 5:** An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. | A. Ensure a system of accountability for every student’s academic and social success  
B. Model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior  
C. Safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity  
D. Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision-making  
E. Promote social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling |
| **Standard 6:** An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. | A. Advocate for children, families, and caregivers  
B. Act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning  
C. Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies |
APPENDIX C
Survey of Educational Leaders

NJPSA Coaching Survey

Informed Consent

Before participating in the study, please review the disclaimer below. Offering your informed consent at the bottom of the page will direct you to the first question of the survey. If you choose not to consent, your internet browser will not direct you to answer any questions.

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Julie Henderson, who is a 4th-year doctoral student in the Applied Psychology Department at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to determine the nature of New Jersey educators’ interest in leadership coaching services. NJPSA agreed to distribute this survey link on my behalf. Approximately 4,000 school leaders in NJ will be invited to participate in the study, and each individual’s participation will last approximately 5 minutes.

Benefits
Regardless of your election to participate or not, all those invited to participate will be provided with a short summary of the survey results once the survey closes. These results will be distributed via email and will report high-level averages. Your participation will guide the design of future methods of leadership development for school leaders.

Anonymity
The study consists of an anonymous online survey. Anonymous means that I will not ask you for any information that could identify you such as your name, school or district name, address, phone number, etc. In no way will your responses be linked back to you. Nobody will see the data except myself and my advisor, and neither of us will be able to infer who submitted each response.

Voluntariness
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may exit the survey at any time without any penalty. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable.

Content
The questionnaire asks for characteristics of your school and your leadership role. There are agreement statements about professional development. Leadership coaching is defined, and there are questions about your reaction to the definition. Results will inform potential development of professional support services for educational leaders.

Reporting
The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group-level results will be reported. Your individual response will never be singled out or reported on its own.

Risks
There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. You may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study other than learning about and helping to design a new professional development service for educational leaders.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, please contact Julie Henderson (email: juhend@rutgers.edu; tel: 914.475.7887), or you can contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Charlie Maher (email: camaher@rci.rutgers.edu; tel: 732.446.2000). Written correspondence can be sent to either of us:
The Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology
Applied Psychology Department
152 Frelinghuysen Rd.
Piscataway, NJ 08854
732-932-2000

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Rutgers University IRB Administrator:
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
1. Do you agree to the above terms of participation?

- [ ] I agree to the above terms and wish to proceed with the online survey.
- [ ] I do not agree to the above terms and do not wish to proceed with this survey.
NJPSEA Coaching Survey

Professional Development

2. How frequently do you think about developing your leadership skills?
   - Never
   - When I must
   - Monthly
   - Weekly
   - Daily

3. Where do you learn about professional development opportunities?

4. How do you select professional development activities for yourself?
   - They are selected for me.
   - I seek out opportunities myself.
   - Others recommend opportunities.

5. Where do you most frequently take your job-related concerns?
   - Family member
   - Friend
   - Peer
   - Supervisor
   - Counselor
   - Coach
   - No one

6. On a 7-point scale, from "Not at all" to "A great deal,"

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does this person help you?</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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<td>Not at all (1)</td>
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<td>Somewhat (4)</td>
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<td>A great deal (7)</td>
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NJPSSA Coaching Survey

7. What type of consultation would be helpful for you at this point in time?

- Retired educational leader
- Currently practicing educational leader
- Any third party sounding board
- A leadership specialist
- None
- Other (please specify)
Leadership Coaching

Please read this short description of leadership coaching to answer the next few questions.

Leadership coaching is a short-term professional development opportunity for the top level of building leadership. Initially, it is a 6-month process driven by the leader’s management goals. In contrast to mentor and peer coaching, it is facilitated by a professional expert in organizational theory and practice. Weekly conversations range from 1 – 2 hours. The relationship ends when the leader feels the coach can add no further value and there is mutual agreement that goals were achieved. This opportunity can be beneficial for educational leaders new to their role and those in a new or changing school.

8. On a scale from 1 to 7 ("Not at all interested" to "Very interested"), to what extent would you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all interested</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Somewhat interested</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Very interested</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... be interested in learning more about leadership coaching services?</td>
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<td>... be interested in pursuing leadership coaching services?</td>
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9. Can you foresee dedicating 1 hour per week to discuss work-related issues?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

10. How do you feel about leadership coaching?

- ○ It might not apply to educators.
- ○ It might apply to educators, but not me.
- ○ It might apply to educators, including me.
- ○ Other (please specify)

11. What if anything about leadership coaching appeals to you?

- ○
- ○

12. What if anything about leadership coaching does NOT appeal to you?

- ○
- ○
### NJPSA Coaching Survey

#### Demographic Information

Your response is most meaningful when it is linked to specific subgroups. This allows me to investigate important preferential differences among groups of leaders. Individual responses are never reported alone.

13. Please indicate your role in the school.

- Principal
- VP/AP
- Supervisor
- Director
- Retired

14. How many years have you held your current role? If applicable, round up to the nearest whole number.

15. How many consecutive years have you been working in education? If applicable, round up to the nearest whole number.

16. Gender:

- Female
- Male

17. School level:

- K - 5
- K - 8
- 6 - 8
- 9 - 12
- District level
- None of the above

18. How many people formally lead your building (including VP, AP, Deans, and yourself)?
19. Your NJDOE District Factor Group (1 or 2 letters between A and J):

20. What other thoughts would you like to share?
Thank you

Thank you for your interest in this study. Your participation is very much appreciated. Check your inbox for the results of this study, which will be sent via email after the survey closes.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, please contact me at juhend@rutgers.edu or my advisor Dr. Charlie Maher at camaher@rutgers.edu.

The Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology
Applied Psychology Department
152 Frelinghuysen Rd.
Piscataway, NJ 08854
732-932-2000

This informed consent form was approved by the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects on February 10, 2009.