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Fostering Effective School-University Partnerships Within Teacher Preparation Programs: Lessons from Leaders in a Qualitative Case Study

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**FOSTERING EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY
PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN TEACHER
PREPARATION PROGRAMS:
LESSONS FROM LEADERS
IN A QUALITATIVE
CASE STUDY**

by

Morgan Elizabeth Fitch, B.S., M.Ed.

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the degree
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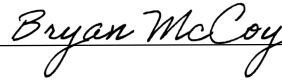
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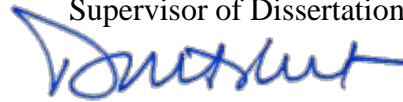
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover crucial elements that serve as the foundation for developing effective, sustainable school-university partnerships within teacher preparation programs. This study employed an instrumental case study guided by the distributed leadership theory to understand the operational leadership process of developing and sustaining a school-university partnership within a teacher preparation program. Data from this study consisted of partnership leader interviews and essential partnership documents. Findings of this study included the following: leaders recognize personnel with defined roles within the partnership, leaders believe open communication is vital to the partnership, leaders perceive a positive relationship between the district and the program, and leaders believe the partnership is mutually beneficial. The elements crucial to developing and sustaining an effective school-university partnership within teacher preparation programs identified by this study are mutual needs, mutual benefits, defined personnel roles, open communication, shared personnel, honesty, trustworthiness, and shared culture.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Partnerships are mutually beneficial agreements for all engaged members working towards the same goal of successful teacher preparation (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP], 2021). For example, an arrangement between university programs and local school districts, jointly responsible for pre-service teacher preparation, is considered a school-university partnership (Burton & Greher, 2007). The structure of school-university partnerships is complex by nature as it is mutually beneficial and requires trust, decision-making, and communication (Farah, 2019). While much is known about school-university partnerships and associated challenges, more needs to be known about developing and sustaining effective school-university partnerships within teacher education programs (Goldring & Sims, 2005). As university and school leaders are crucial stakeholders within a school-university partnership, this study examined leaders' beliefs regarding an effective partnership's development and sustainability (Clark, 1999; Nettleton & Barnett, 2016).

Background of Problem

School-university partnerships are standard practice within teacher preparation programs (Tracz et al., 2018). Teacher preparation programs should equip teacher candidates with the skills necessary to succeed in the classroom, which requires clinical

experiences at partnered districts to translate theory into practice and be successful (Decker et al, 2018; Tracz et al., 2018).

Additionally, effective school-university partnerships support teacher efficacy, increase teacher retention rates, and increase K-12 student learning outcomes (CAEP, 2021; Decker et al., 2018). School-university partnerships are essential to sustain efforts in the areas listed above (Decker et al., 2018; Farah, 2019; Tracz et al., 2018).

National and state-level accreditation agencies have recently reiterated the importance of school-university partnership by including collaboration as criteria to meet accreditation standards (CAEP, 2021). Newly revised national and state-level accreditation standards require school-university partnerships to be effective. Effective partnerships are those that involve stakeholders, are mutually beneficial, and share responsibility and accountability in the preparation of teacher candidate outcomes (CAEP, 2021). The studied program in this case was recently mandated to a new initial certification policy that requires programs and districts to partner to ensure all traditional and alternative teacher candidates receive mentoring from a credentialed site-based mentor by the state's department of education.

Effectively developed school-university partnerships benefit all stakeholders within the partnership (Decker et al., 2018; Easley et al., 2017). For instance, teacher preparation programs benefit when partnering with school districts because without clinical experiences, programs cannot meet national and state-level accreditation standards and certification requirements (Decker et al., 2018). Likewise, school districts benefit when teacher candidates are placed at its schools because district stakeholders can hire candidates knowledgeable of district policies and procedures. Also, school-university

partnerships allow teacher candidates to benefit from the opportunities to practice and develop while being mentored (Decker et al., 2018).

As the demands for effective school-university partnerships increase, research needs to identify critical components for the development and sustainability of school-university partnerships (Farah, 2019; Tracz et al., 2018). By exploring leaders' beliefs in developing effective, sustainable school-university partnerships, teacher preparation programs can consider elements identified by the current study when developing or improving partnerships.

Significance of this Study

Leadership is a crucial component of school-university partnership development (Clark, 1999; Farah, 2019). Additionally, leading a school requires multiple levels of leadership, involving formal and informal roles (Spillane, 2006). Consistent recommendations within the literature about school-university partnerships are that future research determines how leaders impact partnership development, examines characteristics within relationships that build trust, and investigates how effective school-university partnerships develop (Decker et al., 2018; Easley et al., 2017; Tracz et al., 2018). The current study design was in response to these recommendations.

Purpose of this Study

Previous school-university partnership research concentrated on the demands, benefits, impacts, barriers, and challenges to school-university partnerships (Decker et al., 2018; Farah, 2019; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Tracz et al., 2018). The purpose of this

qualitative case study was to discover crucial elements that serve as the foundation for the development of effective, sustainable school-university partnerships.

Theoretical Framework

Leaders are essential when developing school-university partnerships (Krumm & Curry, 2017; Lowery et al., 2018). Additionally, leaders initiate partnerships, and engaged leaders sustain partnerships (Clark, 1999; Farah, 2019; Goldring & Sims, 2005). Thereby, leadership is a crucial component of school-university partnerships, and when leaders share responsibilities, partnerships can establish effectiveness. School-university partnerships involve multiple leaders with distributed responsibilities (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Spillane, 2006). The current study's guiding theoretical framework was the distributed leadership theory to understand how to develop effective, sustainable school-university partnerships (Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership theory is the practice of effective educational leadership, not a model for effective educational leadership (Spillane, 2006).

Research Questions

The current study focused on leadership positions within a partnership for a more in-depth understanding of its development and sustainability (Stake, 1995). More specifically, this study examined how a teacher preparation program developed an effective and sustainable school-university partnership with a local school district. The instrumental case presented in the current study was selected because it demonstrated attributes of an effective partnership with the involvement of multiple leaders.

This case study sought to understand better how to develop an effective and sustainable school-university partnership within teacher preparation programs through three research questions.

1. How do school-university partnerships develop into effective and successful collaborations for teacher preparation programs?
2. How can the sustainability of school-university partnerships be ensured?
3. What are the cultural characteristics of an effective school-university partnership?

Three theoretical propositions based on the review of literature guided the development of research questions and guided the initial inquiry into the case (Yin, 2017).

1. School-university partnerships develop effectively and successfully by identifying leadership levels and responsibilities involved in the partnership (Goldring & Sims, 2005).
2. When partnership leaders collaborate to create an effective leadership team, they ensure the sustainability of school-university partnerships (Goldring & Sims, 2005).
3. Shared culture increases the effectiveness of a school-university partnership (Goldring & Sims, 2005).

Delimitations

The criteria for selecting district stakeholder participants delimited the current study by only considering leaders working with traditional and alternative teacher candidates. The study did not consider non-leadership partnership personnel. Another

delimitation was that this study did not examine the achievements of K-12 students or teacher candidates involved in this partnership.

Limitations

The current study used a qualitative case study methodology. Methodological limitations are that no claims can be made of either causation or correlation (Merriam, 2009). Because this is a single case study, external validity is limited to naturalistic generalizations made by readers as they compare contexts known to them with the thick description of the case presented within the current study. The context of this study limited access to certain types of sensitive information about personnel, university, and K-12 students.

Definition of Key Concepts and Terms

The following concepts and terms are referenced through the duration of this study:

Candidate: an individual engaged in the preparation process for professional educator licensure/ certification/ endorsement with an educator preparation provider (CAEP, 2020).

Clinical Experiences: the culminating clinical practice experience in some settings; can be of varying duration but no less than one university semester. (CAEP, 2020).

Completer: any candidate who exited a preparation program by successfully satisfying the requirements of the educator preparation program. (CAEP, 2020).

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP): nonprofit and nongovernmental agency that accredits education preparation providers (CAEP, 2020).

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): instrument used to build mutual respect and trust between partners while delineating specific roles and responsibilities of the partnering agencies (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2014).

Partner: organizations, businesses, community groups, agencies, schools, districts, and/ or EPPs specifically involved in designing, implementing, and assessing the clinical experience (CAEP, 2020).

Partnership: mutually beneficial agreement among various partners in which all participating members engage in and contribute to goals for the preparation of education professionals (CAEP, 2020).

Stakeholder: partners, organizations, businesses, community groups, agencies, schools, districts, and/ or educator preparation providers interested in candidate preparation or education (CAEP, 2020).

Standard R2 - Clinical Partnerships and Practice: the provider ensures effective partnerships and high-quality clinical practice are central to candidate preparation (CAEP, 2021).

Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Cohort 5 grant project: grant through the federal government to strengthen the teaching profession and expand access to excellent teachers and leaders in rural schools (Appendix B).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of the current study was to discover crucial elements that serve as the foundation for developing effective, sustainable school-university partnerships within teacher preparation programs. Teacher preparation programs have widely utilized school-university partnerships to secure clinical experience placements for initial certification programs. In doing so, school and university leaders have critical roles in initiating and sustaining these partnerships (Clark, 1999).

To initiate the literature review, EBSCO, ERIC, Google Scholar, and JSTOR were used to identify current, relevant, peer-reviewed studies associated with school-university partnerships. A significant additional resource for identifying pertinent studies was the references section included in studies identified through the online databases. The initial literature search identified several research areas related to school-university partnerships. This chapter reviews published studies focused on critical topics in the study of school-university partnerships (Decker et al., 2018; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Timperley, 2005), which include distributed leadership theory, community-university partnerships, partnership leadership, and teacher preparation partnerships.

The initial database search was limited to journal articles published since 2010. The review of the literature associated with distributed leadership theory generated 28 studies that utilized the distributed leadership theory. The database search yielded 23

studies through reviewing literature focusing on community-university partnerships. The search of literature about partnership leadership returned 39 studies. Finally, the search for studies specifically focused on teacher preparation partnership yielded 27 studies. The first section of the literature review covers distributed leadership theory. The following sections cover community and university partnerships, partnership leadership, and teacher preparation partnerships.

Theoretical Framework

Spillane's (2006) text, *Distributed Leadership*, was the primary literature source reviewed regarding distributed leadership theory. Distributed leadership is the perspective of leadership practices and leadership as the actions bound to an organization's mission, arranged by the members to encourage others to become active within the organization.

Spillane (2006) studied distributed leadership within Chicago elementary schools. The primary purpose of Spillane's 5-year study was to develop a deeper understanding of practice with distributed leadership. The results in this study indicated that utilization of distributed leadership practices increased student achievement. However, while the practice of distributed leadership positively impacted this case, distributed leadership is not a blueprint for effective school leadership. When using distributed leadership as a framework, leadership effectiveness is increased.

Leading a school requires more than one leader (Spillane, 2006). Policymakers and district personnel should endorse the idea of multiple leaders leading a school and provide appropriate support to all leaders involved. Additionally, schools can successfully distribute leadership by identifying formal leadership positions by either

creating new positions or reevaluating current positions and establishing structures and procedures to ensure responsibilities are equally distributed (Spillane, 2006).

Timperley (2005) studied the leadership process of successful and unsuccessful elementary schools to determine how leadership is distributed. Data were collected through qualitative interviews and observations to identify three critical constructs regarding distributed leadership: leadership activities rather than traits, social distributions of task-enactment, and specific distributions of task-enactment. School leadership should not focus only on formal positions but rather on expertise to develop leadership roles. Doing so creates teacher-leaders, which is supported by distributed leadership theory.

Liang and Sandmann (2015) studied distributed leadership in the university context. The first purpose was to examine leaders at institutions known for extensive engagement with the community and to understand how they are involved in the engagement process. The second purpose was to understand institutional elements that encourage leaders to distribute leadership functions to multiple stakeholders to increase engagement. This study's results indicated that successful institutions at community engagement utilize multiple types of leaders whose responsibilities are determined by their expertise.

Summary of Theoretical Framework

Based on Spillane's (2006) perspective, distributed leadership theory is not designed to prescribe effective leadership but rather a framework to assume leadership effectively. The concept of distributed leadership focuses on the practice of distributing leadership among key stakeholders to increase engagement in the process (Liang &

Sandmann, 2015). The critical component of distributed leadership is the belief that leadership is no longer only associated with formal administration positions (Spillane, 2006; Timperley, 2005). Distributed leadership allows multiple leaders to lead with a purposeful distribution of duties. Implementing a distributed leadership model requires identifying leaders through designated roles to distribute responsibilities effectively.

While the literature about school-university partnerships generally is grounded in leadership theory, in addition to distributed leadership, other related theories are represented and include inter-organizational relationships, cross-boundary leadership, and transformational leadership. Leaders use inter-organizational relationships to understand the development of inter-organizational partnerships (Goldring & Sims, 2005). Cross-boundary leadership is the concept that leaders cross structural boundaries to share responsibilities (Krumm & Curry, 2017). Finally, transformational leadership is the practice by which leadership encourages members to work towards change (Lowery et al., 2018).

Community-University Partnerships

Universities increase economic and social development growth regionally and provide opportunities for mutual development through community-university partnerships (Kindred & Petrescu, 2015). Furthermore, university resources are essential when assisting problems within communities (Curwood et al., 2011). Key topics across the body of literature understand why universities pursue community partnerships and the unique perspectives of university and K-12 partners (Kuttner et al., 2019; Morrell et al., 2015; Siegel, 2010).

Siegel (2010) studied inter-organizational partnerships to analyze university leaders' roles and motivation to engage with cross-sector social partnerships. Data for this study were collected qualitatively through semi-structured interviews. The interview results revealed four significant and overlapping themes for community-university partners to consider when deciding to join: issue framing, fittings, use of entry stories, and rationale. The issue of diversity in education and careers motivates universities to collaborate cross-sector. It is necessary for universities to partner with community organizations to address the issue of diversity. In doing so, partners combine their abilities to strengthen the partnership mission of diversity in education and careers. Then when partnership participants share stories of success, university leaders are encouraged to become members of the partnership. University leaders should view partnerships as learning opportunities and not business affairs. In addition, it is vital to develop a deeper understanding of the motivations behind stakeholder involvement in community-university partnerships. Understanding motivations can offer insights into why stakeholders aspire to work together to effectively address challenges in the community.

Kuttner et al. (2019) utilized a qualitative single case study to examine a community-university partnership to explore the functions of Dostilito's competency model. This model identified the following six areas: leading change in higher education, institutionalizing community engagement on campus, facilitating students' civic learning and development, administering community engagement programs, facilitating faculty development and support, and cultivating high-quality partnerships. Based on this model, the findings from this study identified four themes: relationship building, building

community leadership and organizational capacity, community and system change, and engaging power.

Maintaining trust and reciprocity is required to develop an effective partnership (Kuttner et al., 2019). Partnership managers build the partnership and its relationship by providing support and developing mutual goals and trust, honesty, and reciprocity. While partnership development involves initial leaders, the partnership continuously provides opportunities for leadership growth through a leadership initiative to support potential leaders. Partnership managers have the responsibilities to mentor and support potential leaders. Additionally, partnership managers must understand how systems work to analyze feedback and improve the partnership. Partnership managers must work together to develop goals and outcomes because partnership improvements impact all partners. When considering partnership improvements, partnership managers should explore the power relationship first. For the partnership to maintain reciprocity, partners should share power (Kuttner et al., 2019).

Morrell et al. (2015) examined a community-university partnership to determine if the partnership still effectively addresses today's problems. The researchers utilized a qualitative method to collect data through semi-structured interviews. Universities have academic calendars to follow, which creates challenges for partnerships. Scheduled university closures result in difficulty for community partners when students and faculty are absent. Effective community-university partnerships should develop intentionally and be meaningful for all partners to accomplish mutual goals.

Summary of Community-University Partnerships

Relationships are essential to successful partnerships; partnerships develop community leaders, support organizational growth, and are mutually beneficial (Kuttner et al., 2019; Morrell et al., 2015; Siegel, 2010). Community-university partnerships involve interacting systems that aim to address societal issues through power-sharing. Effective partnerships develop from relationships intentionally founded upon trust and the desire to impact mutual interests positively. University partnership development should start viewing partnered organizations as partners and not as objects. When universities recognize organizations as partners, experts can share their expertise to solve problems (Siegel, 2010; Weerts, 2005).

Partnership Leadership

Forming networks in teacher preparation requires leadership to guide and support others (Boyer et al., 2019; Farah, 2019). Partnership leadership roles require knowledge and expertise of the missions of unique partners (Hudson et al., 2012). Leadership roles include both formal and informal roles (Spillane, 2006). Strong leaders have the abilities to work through problems and provide solutions to increase school-university partnership effectiveness (Clark, 1999). Key topics across the body of literature regarding partnership leadership understand the importance of leader involvement in partnership development, leading and sustaining partnerships, and effective partnerships requiring multiple leaders.

Lowery et al. (2018) utilized qualitative semi-structured interviews to examine school leaders' beliefs regarding developing and sustaining school-university partnerships. Developing effective school-university partnerships requires the early involvement of all stakeholders. Early engagement of all stakeholders allows the

opportunity to share decision-making and increases teacher buy-in and responsibility awareness. Effective school-university partnerships assist in overcoming common rural school challenges. School-university partnership in a rural context increases classroom instruction and resources, quality teacher recruitment, professional development, and motivates underserved students to pursue college. Participation in the partnerships provides classroom teachers with leadership opportunities. Effective school-university partnerships provide improved teacher candidate and K-12 learning, continuous learning for classroom teachers, and increased instruction time with two teachers in the classroom.

Krumm and Curry (2017) employed a qualitative case study to investigate six different school districts considered urban, suburban, or rural to understand how to lead meaningful, sustainable partnerships based on school leaders' actions and attitudes. Partnership relationships that are professional and reciprocal are essential to developing school-university partnerships. Shared influences and shared decision-making encourage stakeholders to participate in partnerships because trust and credibility are established. School-university partnerships should be reciprocal so that responsibility and accountability are shared to achieve the common goal of the partnership. Additionally, sharing responsibility and accountability increases partnership sustainability. Communication, respect, and feedback also promote sustaining school-university partnerships.

Goldring and Sims (2005) evaluated a university-community district through qualitative interviews to determine how these partnerships develop as successful cooperative endeavors. The findings of this study indicated that the development and implementation of this partnership were successful because the initiating leaders utilized

guiding factors developed by Senge et al. (1999). Accordingly, participating leaders recognized the importance of the following engaged leaders: top-level leaders, frontline leaders, and bridge leaders. The qualitative interviews also revealed mutual commitment and shared culture as essential components to a successful partnership (Goldring & Sims, 2005).

Successful university-community-district partnerships require a networking leader to focus on the partnership, make connections, and build solid relationships (Goldring & Sims, 2005). Developing a partnership mission statement provides a clear guide to follow and increases sustainability. Mission statements and effective networking leaders establish trust, mutual commitment, and a shared culture within a university-community-district partnership.

Summary of Partnership Leadership

Trust is an essential component to developing and overcoming barriers associated with partnership leadership (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Krumm & Curry, 2017; Lowery et al., 2018; Sanzo & Wilson, 2016). Partnership leadership requires multiple leaders, mutual respect, an established shared culture, and shared responsibilities (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Krumm & Curry, 2017; Lowery et al., 2018). Finally, successful leaders provide leadership opportunities and support to potential leaders within the partnership (Lowery et al., 2018).

Teacher Preparation Partnerships

University leaders should understand their roles as learners within partnerships because knowledge sharing is the focus of school-university partnerships within teacher preparation programs (Murtagh & Birchinall, 2018). Additionally, school-university

leaders should build collaborative relationships over time based on trust (Farah, 2019; Murtagh & Birchinall, 2018; Sanzo & Wilson, 2016). Key topics across the body of literature regarding teacher preparation partnerships are understanding about the effectiveness of the school-university partnership, clinical partnerships and field experience opportunities, and how school-university partnerships can be improved (Decker et al., 2018; & Easley et al., 2017; Tracz et al., 2018).

Tracz et al. (2018) utilized a qualitative case study to examine a school-university partnership between a teacher preparation program and local school districts to document the evolution of the partnership. The change to collective perspectives fostered the shift of sharing responsibilities of preparing student teachers, leading to co-teaching. The university leader identified a university liaison to coordinate partnership logistics which are critical components to the partnership and establish a family-like, emotional support system. The current student-teacher requirement has evolved into classroom teachers acknowledging the responsibility of training the next generation of teachers and sharing their knowledge and practice.

Decker et al. (2018) studied a teacher preparation program and a local high school to outline partnership beliefs regarding the CAEP Standard R2 utilizing a qualitative case study. Collaboration is crucial when supporting clinical experiences in teacher preparation programs. In addition, collaboration is the foundation to achieve a mutually beneficial partnership. Collaboration allows teacher preparation programs and school districts to co-create meaningful practices to prepare teacher candidates effectively. School-university partnership positively impacts K-12 students with two teachers in the classroom to provide more one-on-one support. Establishing shared accountability

requires stakeholders to acknowledge their commitment to effectively prepare teacher candidates to increase K-12 student success.

Easley et al. (2017) studied a university teacher preparation program and a local school district through a qualitative case study to determine the professional development impact and effective elements for promoting professional development. When mentor teachers demonstrate reflective practices, the mentor teachers' and teacher candidates' learning increases through an open space created in the relationship. Recurring partner meetings foster a culture of collaboration that establishes a trusting relationship. Extended student teacher placements with the same mentor teacher increase a teacher candidates' confidence, self-efficacy, and learning and improve K-12 student learning.

Summary of Teacher Preparation Partnerships

National accreditation standards specify that teacher preparation programs and school districts are jointly responsible for teacher preparation (CAEP, 2021). These accreditation standards emphasize the effectiveness and sustainability of teacher preparation partnerships (CAEP, 2021; Decker et al., 2018). Teacher preparation partnerships require partners to provide genuine feedback for improvement while sharing the process of decision-making and problem solving (Farah, 2019; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). The development of teacher preparation partnerships is imperative to the partnership's success, which impacts the teaching profession (Easley et al., 2017; Farah, 2019). Teacher preparation partnership development should include the following: involved stakeholders, shared accountability in teacher preparation, mutually beneficial, and a positive impact on K-12 students (Decker et al., 2018; & Easley et al., 2017; Tracz et al., 2018).

Summary

The literature reviewed explored the distributed leadership theory (Liang & Sandmann, 2015; Spillane, 2006; Timperley, 2005), community-university partnerships (Kuttner et al., 2019; Morrell et al., 2015; Siegel, 2010), partnership leadership (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Krumm & Curry, 2017; Lowery et al., 2018), and teacher preparation partnerships (Decker et al., 2018; & Easley et al., 2017; Tracz et al., 2018). Throughout the literature reviewed, the following factors were consistent as potential developmental and sustainable elements of an effective school-university partnership: mutual benefits, shared culture, shared responsibility and accountability, multiple leaders, strong relationships, and trust (Decker et al., 2018; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Kuttner et al., 2019; Lowery et al., 2018; Tracz et al., 2018).

Mutually beneficial partnerships require shared goals, open communication, and a strong relationship to develop effectively (Decker et al., 2018; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Krumm & Curry, 2017; Tracz et al., 2018). Setting a shared goal for the partnership also creates a shared culture required to sustain the partnership. Additionally, informal and open communications serve as the foundation for building trusting relationships within partnerships. Involving partners in decision-making increases trust within the relationship.

Effective partnerships involve multiple leaders in the development process, which requires professional and reciprocal relationships (Decker et al., 2018; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Krumm & Curry, 2017; Kuttner et al., 2019). Partners mutually benefit when sharing responsibilities and accountability within the partnership. In addition, sharing leadership and responsibilities increases the sustainability of partnerships. School-

university partnership leaders within teacher preparation share the responsibility of developing the next generation of teachers.

School-university partnerships are complex with associated barriers and challenges (Farah, 2019). However, school-university partnerships have proven to be essential to education. The success of school-university partnerships within teacher preparation programs is determined by partnership development (Easley et al., 2017; Farah, 2019). Leadership is an essential component required in developing and sustaining school-university partnerships (Clark, 1999). The current study examined leaders' beliefs regarding an effective partnership's development and sustainability.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the current study was to discover key elements that serve as the foundation of effective, sustainable school-university partnership development. Clark (1999) suggested that leaders initiate partnerships, and Goldring and Sims (2005) proposed engaging multiple leadership levels to sustain partnerships. When investigating a bounded system, the case study method is the best to use (Merriam, 2009). Thereby, the current study is a qualitative instrumental case study designed to examine leaders to understand and develop a rich, thick description of the development and sustainability of a school-university partnership within teacher preparation programs (Stake, 1995).

As university and school leaders are crucial stakeholders within a school-university partnership, the current case study investigated leader beliefs about developing and sustaining an effective partnership (Clark, 1999). The current case was a school-university partnership between a nationally accredited educator preparation program at a regional university in a southern state (denoted herein as “the program”) and a local school district (denoted herein as “the district”).

The research questions sought to answer through this case study are:

1. How do school-university partnerships develop into effective and successful collaborations for teacher preparation programs?

2. How can the sustainability of school-university partnerships be ensured?
3. What are the cultural characteristics of an effective school-university partnership?

The remainder of this chapter includes details of the case study design and participant selection criteria, data collection, and analysis method. Finally, researcher positionality and biases are presented.

Study Design

The current study explored how teacher preparation programs develop effective and sustainable partnerships with local school districts through a qualitative framework. This case study is considered instrumental because the case sought to understand the operational process of developing and sustaining a school-university partnership (Stake, 1995). This case focused on the partnership leaders to grasp the operational process in developing effective and sustainable school-university partnerships.

Case Selection

Purposeful sampling is used when qualitative research is designed to understand or gain insight from the study (Merriam, 2009). Purposeful sampling is a strategy for choosing information-rich cases to study that in nature broadens understanding and increases research content knowledge (Patton, 2014). The current study utilized an instrumental case study to examine leaders within a school-university partnership to provide thick descriptions of leadership practices essential to developing effective and sustainable school-university partnerships (Patton, 2014).

The case for the current study was purposefully selected and required that the case had a current MOU and currently placed undergraduate candidates. The studied case was

also required to employ and mentor alternative teacher candidates; and have an established, documented partnership. Considering these requirements, partnerships were evaluated using the Working Better Together tool (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2017). The CCSSO created this tool to provide teacher preparation programs and local school districts a way to measure partnership effectiveness. The partnership that met all the initial criteria and scored highest using the CCSSO tool was selected as the case for the current study.

Leader Selection

The current study utilized purposeful and snowball sampling when selecting leaders to interview. All key partnership stakeholders were considered before the initiation of the current study. The director, field experience coordinator, assessment coordinator, district liaison, and personnel director were identified as leaders and were purposefully selected to interview. Snowball sampling occurred when the district liaison and personnel director recommended principals, instructional coaches, and mentor teachers as potential participants.

Data Collection

Triangulation was established using multiple data sources to confirm the school-university partnership development and effectiveness between the studied program and district and strengthen the study's data collection (Stake, 1995). The data sources included interview transcripts, partnership documents, and the researcher's data journal. These sources provided evidence to understand partnership development better.

Leader Interviews

Research interviews are considered conversations between the researcher and study participants with the study's context as the focus (Merriam, 2009). Research interviews have three structures: highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Merriam, 2009). The current study utilized highly structured interviews with predetermined questions and interview protocol, and leaders were asked the same questions.

The interview protocol and questions were alpha and beta tested with two higher education leaders and four K-12 leaders. The objective of the alpha testing was to ensure interview questions were adequate and in the proper order. To test the interview questions and protocol, the researcher conducted beta tests through one-on-one interviews to ensure the interview questions aligned with the current study's purpose and research questions.

The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with the selected leaders in the current study using the interview questions and interview protocol validated through alpha and beta testing. An audio device recorded all interviews. The researcher also listened carefully and attentively to details during leader interviews, took notes, and asked follow-up questions for clarification as suggested by Stake (1995).

Partnership Documents

The leading document that guided the current study was the formal contract for the school-university partnership, the MOU. The reviewed MOU provided evidence of the partnership negotiations, expectations, and agreement. In this case, the state department of education required teacher preparation programs to develop partnerships with local school districts for program design, implementation, and evaluation. The state

department of education also requires MOUs to include roles and responsibilities of program and district stakeholders; protocols for assessing teacher candidates for teacher preparation and certification requirements; and protocol for sharing data for program improvement.

Leader interviews identified additional essential partnership documents, including a legal directive from the state department of education, CAEP Revised 2022 Standards Workbook (2021), and TIF Cohort 5 grant project (Appendix C). The intent behind collecting numerous documents associated with the partnership was to analyze the documents to strengthen the study's trustworthiness through multiple sources.

Data Analysis

Qualitative case study data analysis does not follow a predetermined timeline (Stake, 1995). Instead, data analysis is a continuous action throughout the research process to answer the study's research questions (Merriam, 2009). This case study's data analysis followed an inductive analysis approach (Stake, 1995). The current study's research questions and theoretical propositions based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 guided this case study analysis (Yin, 2017).

Leader Interviews

After each interview, the researcher used an online transcription service and compared transcripts to audio recordings to ensure consistency. Next, the interview data were analyzed through the category construction process (Merriam, 2009). The analysis process began by open coding interview transcripts (Merriam, 2009). Once all interview transcripts were coded, the researcher employed analytical coding to determine preliminary categories (Stake, 1995). Finally, based on the preliminary categories

identified through the data, the researcher analyzed interview transcripts again to find supporting evidence for each category (Merriam, 2009).

Partnership Documents

The researcher reviewed essential partnership documents to understand the partnership better and enhance interview interpretations. Partnership documents were analyzed through the category construction process (Merriam, 2009). First, the researcher thoroughly analyzed document data line-by-line through open coding (Merriam, 2009). Then analytical coding was utilized to determine preliminary categories. Using the preliminary categories, the researcher analyzed partnership documents again to find supporting evidence for each category (Merriam, 2009). Finally, categories the researcher discovered through document analysis were compared to categories from interviews to discover the current study's common themes that support developing and sustaining an effective school-university partnership. The researcher identified four overall themes: leaders recognize personnel with defined roles within the partnership, leaders believe open communication is important to the partnership, leaders perceive a positive relationship between the district and the program, and leaders believe the partnership is mutually beneficial.

Researcher Role

The researcher was employed at a regional university in a southern state as the director of teacher certification and professional advancement. The researcher worked closely with leaders and faculty members in the program. As the director of teacher certification and professional advancement, the researcher directed two alternative teacher certification programs at the university: Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Preparation

Program and Master of Arts in Teaching. Because of the program leadership responsibilities, the researcher established working relationships with district personnel. Based on the researcher's experience in school-university partnerships, the researcher expected the current study's findings to yield mutual respect, open communication, mutual support, and a shared culture.

Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness in the current study, the researcher assessed the following criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and reflexivity (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The strategies utilized to ensure trustworthiness included: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, thick descriptions, and a data journal that provided an audit trail (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The researcher used these strategies throughout the current study. First, the researcher engaged with the interview transcripts and additional documentation for extensive periods. Next, leader interviews were persistent as each participant was asked the same questions. The researcher established data triangulation using multiple documents, a data journal, and a research auditor. As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1981), the researcher auditor's role was to carry out a public examination by examining the research process to certify data was collected and analyzed adequately. The researcher also provided thick descriptions of the research methodology, results, and research findings. Next, the creation of a researcher data journal and the use of a research auditor provided an audit trail. Finally, the current study considered the researcher's positionality and employed data triangulation to ensure data reflected what was said by the leaders.

Summary

The current study utilized a qualitative case study to discover crucial elements that serve as the foundation for developing effective, sustainable school-university partnerships. The case in the current study was purposefully selected based on partnership effectiveness, and the participating leaders were selected based on leadership roles. Data collected and analyzed for the current study included leader interviews and essential partnership documents. The researcher employed the category construction process to analyze all data collected to establish common themes to support developing and sustaining an effective school-university partnership.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover crucial elements that serve as the foundation for developing effective, sustainable school-university partnerships within teacher preparation programs. This chapter presents the current study's results. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do school-university partnerships develop into effective and successful collaborations for teacher preparation programs?
2. How can the sustainability of school-university partnerships be ensured?
3. What are the cultural characteristics of an effective school-university partnership?

Data analyzed for the current study included leader interviews and partnership documents. Transcribing the real-time interviews was the first step, and an online transcription service transcribed each interview. Then transcripts were compared to the audio recordings to identify inconsistencies between the transcript and the audio recordings for correction.

In the second step of the analysis, key takeaways from each leader identified four themes. Then, to find evidence supporting each theme, transcripts were reviewed again and coded according to the themes.

Below, the formally interviewed leaders during the current case study are identified. Codes were used to identify participants to ensure anonymity. Table 1 presents the identifying codes for each leader and leader details.

Table 1

Participant Codes and Leadership Roles

<u>Participant Code</u>	<u>Site</u>	<u>Leadership Role</u>	<u>Years' Experience</u>
Program leader 1	Program	Associate Director, CAEP Coordinator, Elementary Faculty	5
Program leader 2	Program	Field Experience and Residency Coordinator	4
Program leader 3	Program	School Director	5
District leader 1	District	Personnel Director	5
District leader 2	District	Residency & Mentor Coordinator	5
District leader 3	District	Middle School Principal & Previous Mentor Teacher	5
District leader 4	District	Mentor Teacher	4
District leader 5	District	Mentor Teacher and Instructional Coach	5

Presentation of Findings

The findings of the current study identified four themes:

1. Leaders recognize personnel with defined roles within the partnership.
2. Leaders believe open communication is important to the partnership.

3. Leaders perceive a positive relationship between the district and the program.
4. Leaders believe the partnership is mutually beneficial.

The following section supports each theme with evidence from the current study's findings.

Theme 1

The studied teacher preparation program is guided by a policy directive from the state department of education. The policy directive provides standards for teacher preparation programs, procedures for program evaluation, and alignment to preparation and certification requirements. In October 2016, the state department of education revised and approved the policy directive to transition from traditional student teaching to a 1-year supervised residency. As seen Appendix B, the directive also obligated programs to partner with local educational agencies (LEA) by an MOU for evidence of the partnership.

Teacher preparation programs must include required practice experiences for teacher preparation, including, at minimum, a 1-year supervised residency in a school setting (Appendix B). Programs must provide the candidate with practice experience in classroom settings within schools with varied socioeconomic characteristics in classroom settings. The directive describes partnership requirements for 1-year residency and required practice experiences for undergraduate and post-baccalaureate preparation programs. As seen in Appendix B, evidence of quality practice experiences must include the provider's commitment to "develop and administer partnerships with one or more local educational agencies in which candidates complete 1-year residency. Evidence of

partnership shall include, but not be limited to, a formal agreement, such as a memorandum of understanding or memorandum of agreement.”

The policy directive requires that formal partnership agreements include the following (Appendix B):

- roles of and responsibilities of program faculty, LEA leaders, residency school site administrators, and residency school site mentor teachers;
- criteria and process for residency school site selection, development, and evaluation of effectiveness, to occur in concert with LEA leadership;
- targets, criteria, and process for mentor teacher recruitment, development, and evaluation, to occur in concert with LEA leadership;
- protocols for administering assessments of candidates’ teaching skill in cooperation with the residency school site administrator or his/her designee during the one-year residency and in general alignment with the partner LEA’s teacher evaluation system and;
- protocols for the secure exchange of data relative to program improvement and evaluation.

Program leader 1 acknowledged the shift to 1-year residency fostered this partnership and started the conversation between the program and district because the district provided feedback on the new residency structure:

So this was born initially from the rumor that we were moving away from traditional student teaching to residency. And so, we knew from our perspective that we needed district partnerships because if we were going to be doing a real residency, we didn’t want to continue doing the model the way we had it. There

was a very different shift from residency than what student teaching was. It's not just more student teaching. And so, to do that, we had to restructure our whole program. And we invited all the districts to talk to us about the best way to do that. So how do we break apart the puzzle and build it back so that they're getting all the methods courses they need? What are the most beneficial courses to offer during residency? We took feedback directly from the districts where some parish has a strong voice, so they have lots of opinions. The district liaison was a key player who had experience with state policy at that time and knew the expectations from the state's perspective, which was really beneficial. And so, it started deeper conversations with the district.

During the shift to 1-year residency, the studied state department of education applied for the TIF Cohort 5 grant project to assist the transition. TIF is an established federal grant designed to provide excellent teachers and principals for students in rural schools (Appendix C). The state received the TIF grant in 2016 with the priority of improving and extending LEA and teacher preparation program partnerships. The TIF budgetary allocations, as seen in Appendix C, funded defined personnel positions at teacher preparation providers and districts. Those positions included the talent pipeline lead at the district and the director of teacher preparation at the provider to support the teacher preparation shift to residency to emphasize improving partnerships (Appendix C).

Leaders recognized that the TIF grant assisted this partnership by initially funding the defined personnel to bridge the gap between K-12 and higher education because a direct contact helped work through the new policy. Program leader 2 stated the following:

There was some external funding that funded those positions in TIF districts, and this district is a TIF district. So like, for instance, my inner-city schools didn't get that. Now they have a person. That's my direct contact, and we can do all the same things. But I just think the level of support and the level of the structure is higher where there is a contact person. Their purpose is to coach, mentor, and do all the things involved with residents and prospects. I think that it does make a difference.

District leader 1 acknowledged the impact of the TIF grant when stating:

The TIF grant created roles at both levels to help really bridge the gap between K-12 and higher education in a significant way and help build needs. I think those roles are essential. Because the department of education communicates to higher education a lot of the time in a way that isn't transmitted to the district, they say the same things, but they say it differently. And having that close contact in those early years when everything was coming down during all these policy changes was really helpful because if I didn't catch it, the program liaison caught it. And if the program liaison didn't catch it, I caught it. And we were always just kind of keeping each other up to date on that.

As evident above, the state department of education and the TIF grant required an MOU to serve as evidence of the partnership with defined roles and responsibilities. The MOU is the formal agreement between the program and the district outlining the agreed-upon responsibilities of each partner. The shared goal agreed upon through the MOU is to improve educator preparation that will benefit students, teacher candidates, and experienced teachers. The established MOU for this partnership clearly defines the roles

and responsibilities for the program and district and mutual responsibilities by designating the position within the program to coordinate with the defined personnel at the district. As seen in Appendix D, the MOU declared that “the teacher preparation program will provide a field experience & residency coordinator, a person to serve as the education preparation program coordinator and district-program liaison.”

Concurrent with the state policy directive, the TIF grant, and the established MOU, leaders recognized the defined roles within the partnership. As shown in the quotes below, leaders believed having personnel assigned specific roles of support in the partnership is essential because an identified contact person at the program and district are directly collaborating to establish structure. Program leader 1 stated:

Through our field residency coordinator, that role is a piece we have to have who can then be the legs of that idea because she can walk it through and see it happen with fidelity, so that’s her role, and it is the most significant role. I think that was one reason we really didn’t have a formal partnership before this because we didn’t have that person who could carry everything out. She is constantly connecting with districts and district liaisons. She is our point person.

Program leader 2 acknowledged this and added to it further:

So, I came along about a year after the first residency pilot. I think that the conversation had started already but I know there wasn’t such a structure in place yet. When I came along, I saw the residency as my role of being out in the schools and really making that a priority to be around candidates and mentors and let the district see us and those sort of things. So I think over time. The then district liaison and I made that a structure where every semester, she and I would plan out

a day for a district visit, and we would go visit every mentor and every candidate in the parish in one day. We'd also have a working lunch session where we kind of just talked about what we saw. The district does some really structured learning walks on those days when we come in, so we get to see our residents in action and teaching and get to see them being coached and things like that. So I think that structure came in after I started, but I felt like it was just what I thought the residency should look like; and I thought I should be out there. I've now mirrored my other districts where the district partner and I get together and go visit all the candidates at one time so that they see us all and we're all on the same page. So in that way, it's not that he said she said things. They see us and hear us saying the same things, so I feel like that structure started once I was the program liaison.

Program leader 2 explained this further:

I think without a position at the university, and I think without a position at the school or school district, it makes it difficult to maintain. Some districts that have people that do multiple jobs and are there, not just the district liaisons and not just over residents, I think that relationship was a little different because there are so many other responsibilities that person has. I believe that having a person at the university level and a person at the district level who can communicate and handle all the problems makes a strong relationship. The protocols that we have in place ensure that there's not something we can do to support the candidate. Come out and visit, make site visits, check-ins. Another part of my role is to communicate with districts and provide them with recruiting opportunities. And to have one contact in the district that acts as the district liaison. I think the level

of support and structure is higher where there is a direct contact person in the district who works directly with residents and candidates, which is a huge benefit for our candidates and us.

In addition to building collaborations and structures to the partnership, leaders also recognized that having personnel assigned specific support roles to sustain the partnership, even after the TIF grant ended because direct contacts kept the communication open, as evidenced below. Program leader 1 hinted at the importance of this role:

Through our field and placement coordinator, that's been a vital role because she's the boots on the ground person who's physically in these schools all the time, and she's talking to the district liaison every week, several times a week, and constantly keeping the communication door open, back and forth. So having that open communication through her, it's just been amazing. We could not sustain the partnerships without her. So we could not do that without that role.

Program leader 3 expounded upon this by adding:

Well, you have to have a point person at each place. So I feel like, for us, it's that residency field experience person in one, and then it's whoever they have, either in their HR or in their pipeline lead position. I feel like they have to have a designated person to sustain.

District leader 1 agreed and highlighted the importance of the role when stating:

So, I would say it was the residency coordinator at the university level and the talent pipeline at the school system level. These roles created sustainability for our job, and we figured out how to fund it when the grant ended. It was not

expensive. And there are ways to keep it going. And I think the value of just having good teachers for our kids is the driving factor.

Theme 2

The MOU for this partnership presented multiple opportunities for communication within the partnership. Opportunities for communication are evident in the collaborative goals, teacher preparation provider responsibilities, school district responsibilities, and mutual responsibilities. The studied MOU, as seen in Appendix D, indicates communication within the partnership includes data sharing, shared training, shared support, determining placements, and shared governance.

For example, the collaborative goal identifies (Appendix D):

- Design and implement within each district a district-based clinically intensive teacher education program inclusive of a year-long residency with the aim of mentoring TPP candidates preparing to be teachers (teacher candidates) to become rated as highly competent in their subject areas, pedagogy, and by the second year of teaching, to produce student achievement gain scores equal to or greater than the district average.
- Establish a framework for transferring de-identified district student data between the district and TPP for the purposes of monitoring and evaluating the preparation and effectiveness of teacher candidates and completers working in the district.

The teacher preparation provider's responsibilities consist of (Appendix D):

- TTP will provide for a field experience and resident coordinator, a person to serve as the education preparation program coordinator and district-program liaison.
- Work with district personnel to collaboratively select, train, support, and evaluate district teachers serving as mentor teachers to teacher candidates.
- Require its teacher candidates to abide by the rules of conduct contained within the TPP student handbook and the district policies and procedures. In the event of non-academic student misconduct that violates criminal law or requires disciplinary action, all applicable district and TPP policies will be followed.
- TTP will give local placement priority to the district in which candidates live.
- TTP will host a residency placement fair each semester to provide recruitment opportunities for partnered districts.

The school district's responsibilities include (Appendix D):

- Collaborate with TPP to identify schools, principals, and mentor teachers to participate in the program's initial teacher preparation initiative and support fidelity of implementation.
- Share and analyze student achievement/assessments/benchmark data with TPP for the purpose of improving student learning and for program improvement; principals or principal designees will evaluate each Resident in their district who is on a practitioner license.
- Actively participate in program evaluation to support K-12 student

achievement and in-service teacher and teacher candidate education program effectiveness.

Mutual responsibilities outlined in the MOU (Appendix D):

- Collaboratively recruit prospective future teachers to the TPP; Including recruiting uncertified teachers for MAT and post-baccalaureate programs.
- Collect and share data that enable the partnership to evaluate the TPP graduate impact on student achievement and success.
- Collaboratively work together to plan and provide interventions to teacher candidates who are identified as in need of support. The TPP and the district will follow policy as outlined in the teacher candidate and resident handbook.
- Actively participate in shared governance for the collaboration by attending governance meetings at least once per semester.

Leaders identified the MOU as a crucial part of the partnerships because it established a line of communication open between the program and district regarding residency placements and shared training, as evident below. District leaders 1 acknowledged the importance of the MOU by stating:

We update our MOU every year. I feel like the program really follows our MOU. I think is really helpful is if they live in our geographical region, we get first dibs on them if we can make them into our match. And that helps some people who want to go to a charter. They put them with us because they know they'll get the support here. Plus, we try to pay them more. So that helps. Yeah, I mean, but we have gotten people that didn't request us because of our MOU. So that helps.

District leader 1 further highlighted the importance of communication when saying:

The program liaison is willing to listen even when mistakes are made. And we are really building mentors and teaching them how to have difficult conversations, how to get ahead of it, how to have that partnership agreement in place so that we don't get there, and vice versa. And just having that open communication and working together, both the program and school system are making program improvement changes.

District leader 2 stated the following about the MOU:

It is very important in our MOU to get first dibs if a resident lives in our district. Another part of the relationship was we had a current resident that we didn't even know who lived in our district at all. But the program liaison knew that. I mean, she could have easily put that resident somewhere else because we didn't know that, but she didn't. She held up her end of the MOU without even being asked to or being reminded she held it up. She knew that person lives in our district.

District leader 5 speaks to open communication within the school-university partnership, "We keep the program going as far as the partnership. We just keep those open lines of communication with the university. So it's just constant communication between the mentors, schools, district, and university."

The MOU served as evidence for meeting CAEP Component R5.3 (Stakeholder Involvement). CAEP is a nonprofit and nongovernmental national agency that accredits the teacher preparation program. CAEP's goal is to strengthen K-12 learning through excellent teacher preparation through the evidence to assure quality while supporting continuous improvement (CAEP, 2021). As shown in the CAEP Revised 2022 Standards

Workbook, Component R5.3 (Stakeholder Involvement) requires communication through input from partnership stakeholders. The teacher preparation program “presents evidence of internal and external stakeholder involvement in program design, evaluation, and continuous improvement processes” (CAEP, 2021, p. 44).

In addition to the MOU and CAEP Component R5.3 (Stakeholder Involvement), leaders recognized the importance of communication within the partnership. District leader 1 describes the communication and how it increases partnership improvements, “Yeah, just having that open communication and working together, and then both programs, the school system and the university making program improvement changes in response that that help.” District leader 4 notes, “The program liaison has been so open-minded and begging for feedback and open to feedback. And I think that’s how the program has grown and gotten better and better.” As shown in the quotes below, leaders believed having open communication has provided opportunities for continuous improvement because the partnership allows for multiple points of feedback and support to create and implement new changes. Program leader 1 discussed the importance of communication when stating:

So it just allows us to have a direct connection to the actual profession. So we get to have that look-back opportunity. So not only are we replacing residents and into our terms. We do surveys with them. The partnership facilitates that. So at the end of their first year, we do roundtables with our leaders to say, you know, how we did our preparation, meet your expectations as far as the demands of your first year of teaching. And we do that for the first three years. So it allows us to get that direct feedback so that we can continuously improve our practices. We

could not be in a true cycle of improvement if we didn't have partnerships like this, where we have a window into what we're doing and that we would also provide opportunities for them to give us that feedback. It's not like, by the way, but we have a very strong system of how we get feedback from them regarding everything that we're doing, not just with residents or interns.

Program leader 1 added to this by discussing data and assessment:

Originally, we asked for everything, like whatever data they collect. Let us have it, and we'll give you anything we want, but they really weren't asking for our data. And so, it was not very even in that regard. And with data that we were collecting it's like, wow, you know, are we really using this or we're really using that? So we kind of scaled back on what we truly needed looking through the national accreditation lens and the state evaluation lens. What's important? What pieces do we need for continuous improvement? What do we have access to that we couldn't get from anywhere else? And so we scaled back a lot on like the types of data that we were collecting. We thought smarter, like so when we were doing student surveys, that would be a great time to make contacts with completers, to set up roundtable dates. We moved from surveys, from roundtables to I'm sorry, we've moved from employer and completed surveys to roundtables. So it's better to get everybody looking at each other and talking about it rather than taking a survey because our responses weren't great. After the initial surveys. So that's changed. We've expanded them because it was so initially, they were so heavily centered around residency and internship, and now they are also encompassing some of our advanced programs.

Program leader 1 then expounded on the importance of feedback:

Having the systems like we have all the feedback options we give them. So everybody has so many multiple points of giving us feedback to say this is working well or this isn't working or how you improve. We do surveys with them that the partnership facilitates. So at the end of their first year, we do roundtables with our leaders to say how we did our preparation and meet your expectations as far as the demands of your first year teaching. We could not have an actual cycle of improvement if we didn't have partnerships like this, where we have a window into what we're doing and that we would also provide opportunities for them to give us that feedback. So we have a robust system of getting feedback from them regarding everything that we're doing.

Program leader 2 discussed the importance of communication when stating:

So I feel like the partnership, them being able to communicate with us and us being able to communicate with them, is for continuous improvement for our program. We have such good communication with this district that they feel they can use things and help us implement, like our post-bacc program. They were the ones that were highly instrumental in the beginning because we have an open relationship. Another benefit of a good relationship is that we have that open communication when they need something or if we need something.

Program leaders 2 added that:

I mean, I think it's important to this community. These are the people we serve. These are the communities we serve. And the more that we work together, the

better we will be. And that's why I think it's important, I think it's important for us to sit down and look at data together and continuously improve on both ends.

Program leader 3 addressed the importance of the partnership when stating:

Outside of just working to keep the teacher pipeline supported and making sure our candidates and residents are supported so that they all have retention and readiness for being a teacher, it's also that understanding of they're helping us stay accredited, they're helping us meet our own requirements for continuous improvement and growth, showing that we are working with the schools in shared creation of, of course, materials and rubrics in planning and developing our programs.

District leader 5 discussed communication within the partnership to ensure growth:

Our partnership is working. The program reaches out, and we do surveys, and we have focus groups on both sides to talk about things that are going well, things that are not going so well. We do training. And then each year, you know, we're just doing those things so that we can make modifications and see what needs to be fixed and what still maybe not work.

Theme 3

Leaders identified the relationship as positive because the defined personnel have open communication and continuously build the relationship. The collaboration components of the established MOU initiated the relationship building within this partnership. As seen in Appendix D, the MOU designates many collaboration opportunities to structure a relationship.

The teacher preparation provider's communication and collaboration responsibilities
(Appendix D):

- TPP will provide for a field experience & resident coordinator, a person to serve as the education preparation program coordinator and district-program liaison.
- Work with district personnel to collaboratively select, train, support, and evaluate district teachers serving as mentor teachers to teacher candidates.

The school district's responsibilities, as seen in Appendix D, support communication and collaboration, "Collaborate with TPP to identify schools, principals, and mentor teachers to participate in the program's initial teacher preparation initiative and support fidelity of implementation."

Mutual communication and collaboration responsibilities (Appendix D):

- Collaboratively recruit prospective future teachers to the TPP; Including recruiting uncertified teachers for MAT and post-baccalaureate programs.
- Collect and share data that enable the partnership to evaluate the TPP graduate impact on student achievement and success.
- Collaboratively work together to plan and provide interventions to teacher candidates who are identified as in need of support. The TPP and the district will follow policy as outlined in the teacher candidate and resident handbook.
- Actively participate in shared governance for the collaboration by attending governance meetings at least once per semester.

Considering the collaboration opportunities presented above regarding defined personnel working together to support mentor teachers and candidates and provide interventions as needed, leaders recognized a strong and positive relationship. As shown in the quotes below, leaders believed the relationship to be strong and positive because the defined personnel continuously build the relationship with honest conversations and established protocols that allow leaders to problem-solve to provide support quickly.

Program leader 1 acknowledged the strength of the relationship when stating:

The three words I would use to describe the partnership would be equitable, robust, and positively effective. We all meet the expectation, and I don't feel like anyone is not fulfilling their role because of the people we have in place to say we have hit a bump in the road, and let's address it now.

Program leaders 2 discussed the importance of a strong relationship between partners:

And then the fact that we have such a strong relationship with them that we can pick up the phone when we have a conflict and need to figure this out. They are not worried about calling me and saying, hey, let's figure this out. I mean, they are there to support us, and we are there to help them. So I feel like all of those things make it successful.

District leader 1 believed their strong relationship fosters hard discussions:

I think we worked well together when we have bad candidates, or I mean because not all of our candidates pass. Since I've been here, we've had two candidates dismissed from the program. It's helped us develop protocols and how to look for dispositions, and how to make sure we don't get there before it's too late again with candidates. And it's helped us too as a school system. We're from the South.

We just want to be nice. And like, I felt terrible. The first meeting kind of exit meeting I went to with the first one, the first year right out the gate. It was glaringly obvious to me that candidate had no idea the feedback had not been given. The mentor had, like, just come. And so we're really building mentors and teaching them how to have difficult conversations, how to get ahead of it, how to have that partnership agreement in place so that we don't get there and vice versa.

District leader 2 discussed the importance of spending time creating a strong relationship:

The program liaison spent a lot of time building relationships. So because of that, we have a close relationship with her, so we can have very candid conversations and very honest conversations to help our residents become better and ensure that we are getting quality teachers. So if there's a problem on our end, she reaches out, we solve the problem. If there's a problem on her end, you know, whatever, whenever issues arise, because she's built a relationship, we work together to solve it because we have that partnership. To ensure that our residents have become high-quality teachers.

District leader 2 further discussed the importance of communication:

It has become closer because we can have honest conversations. When something's not working out, there's no fear, so because of that, things get done, residents get taken care of, and mentors get taken care of because nobody is worried about being honest. I think that's how it's evolved over the years; we couldn't have had that honest conversation back in the beginning.

Leaders identified components to the strong relationship as honesty and trust within the partnership. Program leader 2 describes the partnership relationship as honest.

“And I feel like they are honest. I don’t feel like they have to hold anything back, sugarcoat anything, or say the right thing. Communication is crucial, and just the relationship is the biggest piece.” Program leader 3 provides additional evidence of the strong partnership relationship. “We have that relationship that we can share, and they can share back with us the same way. It’s very much developed into a safe place to have honest conversations.” In addition, the quotes below serve as evidence to support that leaders believed the partnership established trust and honesty because open sharing strengthened the relationship by creating a safe place. Program leader 2 discussed trust:

I trust them explicitly. I trust that the district is coaching our candidates and getting them to a place where it’s not only going to increase their pipeline, but it will affect student learning in K-12, which is why we’re here. Last semester we had to redesign thinking of COVID with residency. One of the first people I called was the district liaison because I thought her voice was super instrumental in what we were going to do and change, so she was a part of that.

Program leader 3 highlighted the importance of trust when stating:

Well, I think it’s evolved to where there’s trust, and we feel very safe telling them our needs and asking for their input on everything from coursework to rubrics to placements to teachers. When we are doing any of our things and developing the program, we include them in the process because they are a trusted stakeholder.

District leader 2 also discussed the importance of trust:

Trust, we can trust the program liaison that when a resident lives in our district, she’s going to put them with us even if we don’t know they live in our district. We can trust she will hold us to her end of the trust and relationship.

Leaders recognized the relationship's growth beyond strong, positive, trusting, and honest to include sharing personnel. Leaders explained that the district liaison is also an adjunct faculty member serving as a university supervisor for the program. As outlined in this partnership's MOU, the teacher preparation provider is responsible for providing the opportunity to share personnel. "Teacher Preparation Provider will contract with a district employee who meets qualifications to serve as a university supervisor for the district residents completing residency two" (Appendix D).

The district liaison only acts as a university supervisor observing residents in this district. However, as shown in the quotes below, leaders believed the district liaison serving as the university supervisor had strengthened this partnership because the district has a deeper understanding of the university expectations and language, reinforcing the trust between the program and district, and increasing the district leaders' ability to support the resident. District leader 1 discussed the importance of the role when stating:

The district liaison is also a university supervisor for the program. It has strengthened the partnerships because it has helped the district learn the expectations of the university and make them fit into the district context, so they are giving aligned feedback. They have learned how to speak the university language, which has been the best and strengthened the partnership. Candidates feel supported because they have someone in the house that knows what's coming next, and we plan our support around that. So I feel like we will get a lot of aligned support, and we can use this mechanism not only to go to the resident but to the mentor.

District leader 2 went on to say:

My role as a university supervisor has strengthened the partnership. That happened because the university reached out to us. I again trust the program liaison and she could trust us to take care of it, so she trusts me to be the university supervisor. The critical part is getting in those classrooms and seeing exactly how the residents need help as their university supervisor.

Theme 4

Leaders believed the partnership was mutually beneficial because it fulfills both partners' needs. The agreed-upon responsibilities of each partner detailed on the MOU guide the partnership so that both partners benefit. In addition, to individual needs, the studied MOU also guided the mutual goal of the partnership, as seen in Appendix D:

The District and the Teacher Preparation Program agree to enter into a collaboration to improve educator preparation by achieving mutual goals that will benefit students, teacher candidates, and experienced teachers. Through this partnership, both the district and program will work to provide meaningful opportunities for professional development and teacher preparation to both teachers and teacher candidates with the end goal of improving student achievement.

Leaders identified the partnership's end goal of improving student achievement because the partnership allows residents to be the second teacher in the classroom and motivates the mentor teacher to learn continuously, as evidenced below. District leader 3 highlighted this went saying:

I feel like maybe one thing people don't realize when the residents come in, they're coming in with new knowledge and probably perhaps new theories they

researched and new ways of reaching the kids that maybe me as a veteran twenty-five years ago, you know, it's going to be different. As I said, I will learn from the resident, just like the resident will learn from me. And I believe they bring in, you know, the innovative strategies or whatever they've learned because education is constantly changing. And so I feel like, for me, that was a benefit.

District leader 4 also discussed the benefits of the partnership:

I was also going to say it benefits kids having two teachers in a classroom. Yeah, kids are going to always benefit. Kids are going to do so much more. There will be more opportunities when there are two teachers in the classroom.

District leader 5 further highlighted the benefits:

Oh gosh, there are many benefits; the biggest advantage is the students. I mean, I'm an advocate. After having residents, I think every class needs two teachers. I feel like our education system is not at its best right now. So the students are coming in a little bit weaker each year and having two people to meet the kids' needs and give them more one-on-one, a smaller group. That's the biggest benefit to me, is for the students. I cannot stress enough the value for the students. I 100% contribute my successful leaps force to the fact that I have two people in my room.

District leader 5 went on to say:

It pushes me harder; I guess it's like it makes me a better teacher because I'm constantly having to stop and think and explain everything that I do and why I do it. And then in teaching a resident what to do. It makes me stop and do those things repeatedly because we get complacent, or I've taught this unit five times,

so I'm not going to go through it as I should. But I am now because I mentor a resident, I need to show her how to go through it. And so it makes me a better teacher, and it helps my students. It keeps me in the loop with you all in their education department and kind of gives me feedback to them on some things that match with what we're doing out in the school. Some things that don't. Those are probably the most significant benefits.

The MOU served as evidence for CAEP Component R2.1 (Partnerships for Clinical Preparation) which falls under Standard R2 (Clinical Partnerships and Practice). Standard R2 requires programs to ensure effective partnerships focused on candidate preparation through high-quality clinical practice, as demonstrated in the CAEP Revised 2022 Standards Workbook, Component R2.1 (Partnerships for Clinical Preparation) presents, "Partners co-construct mutually beneficial P-12 school and community arrangements for clinical preparation and share responsibility for continuous improvement of candidate preparation" (CAEP, 2021, p. 18).

As CAEP Component R2.1 indicates, leaders recognized the partnership as mutually beneficial and shared responsibility for candidate preparation. As shown in the quotes below, leaders believed the partnership is mutually beneficial and increases candidate preparation. The partnership creates high-quality teachers that meet partner district hiring needs while helping the program meet accreditation requirements. Program leader 1 stated that this partnership is important:

Because it builds a quality teacher. It's really hard to say that from the provider's perspective, we're meeting the district's need if we don't have a way to communicate with your district and support them, nor have they have a way to

support us. And so by saying that we're constantly in this sort of conversation with them and we're learning expectations and performance, then we can best prepare candidates to do what they're really expected to do in the field without having to compromise any integrity or rigor of the program.

Program leader 1 highlighted the importance of candidate preparation through the partnership:

My number one goal is to make sure I never think of it to increase the pipeline. It's constantly increasing the ability of the candidates that we prepare. So this partnership allows us to ensure that the candidates that are graduating from the university will meet the district's expectations and not the off-hand side effect is that we want more teachers. Still, I really feel like everything that we've talked about builds a stronger teacher.

Program leader 2 believed:

It's important for our candidates; it's important for K-12. It's important for this university to grow because they're starting some initiatives to develop their own. You know, they're funneling their students through here and going back home for residency. It's all a part of the workforce—they need to grow their own in a rural area. We feed from the rural areas. And if we can have such a strong partnership, they're funneling to us and funneling them to work in the district. So I think they're going to see some things come full circle with it. I mean, I think it's important to this community. These are the people we serve. These are the communities we serve. And the more that we work together, the better it will be.

And that's why I think it's important, and I believe it is important for us to sit down and look at data together and continuously improve on both ends.

Program leader 3 stated this about the relationship:

Well, from the beginning, our goal was to build these more substantial relationships with the district so that when we're dealing with residences, when we're training our teacher candidates, we have a shared understanding of expectations for everything from data to support for the candidates to support to the district and support back with the university said to make it more reciprocal in nature so that we're doing them a service, giving them teacher candidates that are ready to be teachers and giving them potential new teachers that they can put in their districts at that residency piece and then transition to a teaching position over time and then they learn that system while at the same time meeting our needs of having that placement and having that real experience in preparation to become a teacher.

Program leader 3 went on to say:

I think it keeps us grounded and important in the schools because they have that mindset. They know what needs to be done at the K-12 level. We know the higher education side. And so, outside of just working to keep the teacher pipeline supported and ensuring our candidates and residents are supported so that they all have retention and readiness for being a teacher. It's also that understanding they're helping us stay accredited by meeting our continuous improvement and growth requirements. And show we are working with the schools in shared

creation of, of course, materials and rubrics in planning and developing our programs.

District leader 1 stated that this about the teachers created through the partnership:

The quality of the teachers producing together because, oh my gosh. You can see a real difference between a resident and post bacc getting better with the post bacc. But the residents have the knowledge we built. We helped build the skill and put it into practice with a post bacc. You have to develop the knowledge while building the skill, and it's just a bigger lift for them. And some of those recruitment opportunities because of residency had helped fill midyear staffing needs unanticipated with certified teachers, which has never been done before a partnership existed.

District leader 4 believed that:

It is important because with the partnership we're producing, you know, high-quality teachers. So say that a resident graduates and gets hired in our district. Our district sees them as second-year teachers and pays them as second-year teachers.

Summary

Partnership leaders within a school-university partnership were interviewed to determine the development and sustainability of the partnership. Through leader interviews, essential partnership documents were collected: legal directive from the state department of education, TIF Cohort 5 grant project, MOU, and CAEP Revised 2022 Standards Workbook. Through the analysis, the researcher identified four themes: leaders recognize personnel with defined roles within the partnership, leaders believe open communication is essential to the partnership, leaders perceive a positive relationship

between the district and the program, and leaders believe the partnership is mutually beneficial.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover crucial elements that serve as the foundation for developing effective, sustainable school-university partnerships within teacher preparation programs. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of findings in the context of the study's research questions, how findings situate within the literature presented in Chapter 2, recommendations for professional practice and future studies, and conclusion.

Examination of Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do school-university partnerships develop into effective and successful collaborations for teacher preparation programs?

The findings from the current study addressed how school-university partnerships develop into effective and successful collaborations for teacher preparation programs. The key findings that present the most crucial elements in school-university partnership development are mutual needs, mutual benefits, and defined personnel roles. These findings align with current literature acknowledging the importance of leaders within a partnership and suggest that leaders initiate the development of the partnership (Clark, 1999; Farah, 2019; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Lowery et al., 2018). Partnership leaders

establish mutual needs and benefits and define personnel roles within an effective and successful partnership (Clark, 1999; Farah, 2019; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Lowery et al., 2018).

Developing an effective and successful school-university partnership requires first establishing the need. Krumm and Curry (2017) presented similar findings regarding partnership development based on needs. When partners share needs and take time to listen, partners can realize shared needs are mutual, add value, and benefit both. Policy and accreditation requirements influenced the current study's needs. Leaders should create an MOU specific to the school-university partnership needs. Leaders in the current study established the MOU together so that the shared partnership goals and mission fulfill the needs of both.

Effective and successful school-university partnerships are developed based on mutual benefits. CAEP standards guide teacher preparation programs and require programs to partner with local school districts in mutually beneficial ways (CAEP, 2021). The primary mutual benefit in the current study's findings regarding school-university partnership coincides with recent literature regarding residency placements. Decker et al. (2018) discovered that clinical partnerships are mutually beneficial because teacher candidates receive classroom experience and training, while districts view the placement as an extended interview and have the opportunities to train their future teachers by hiring residents placed and mentored in their district. Additional benefits identified by this study include motivating veteran teachers to become mentor teachers, which results in teachers enrolling in the partnered university for further educational preparation to achieve

additional certifications. The current study goes beyond increasing teacher preparation; together, the partnership creates multiple levels of leaders within the district.

Developing an effective and successful school-university partnership requires defining specific roles for key personnel who maintain direct contact and increase the partnership effectiveness because these roles focus strictly on the partnership. Goldring and Sims (2005) examined how university-school-community partnerships develop successfully and found that multiple levels of leadership with defined responsibilities are involved in the development: top-level leaders, frontline leaders, and bridger leaders. Bridger leaders act as networkers who can connect with people and build bridges between partners. The defined roles of university and district liaisons in the current study are more than bridger leaders because the liaisons identify the need and are responsible for being present and accepting the responsibility of building the relationship while remaining unbiased.

Mutual needs, mutual benefits, and defined personnel roles are crucial elements for developing effective and successful school-university partnerships (Decker et al., 2018; Goldring & Sims, 2005; Krumm & Curry, 2017). These essential elements are examples of distributed leadership through multiple leaders (Spillane, 2006). Numerous leaders with defined roles allow partnership development to be effective and successful because the responsibilities are shared and respected.

Research Question 2: *How can the sustainability of school-university partnerships be ensured?*

The key findings that present the most crucial elements in school-university partnership sustainability are defined personnel roles, open communication, and sharing

personnel. These findings align with current literature regarding ensuring partnership sustainability through multiple levels of leadership (Goldring & Sims, 2005). Multiple levels of leaders work to sustain the partnership in different capacities and keep the lines of communication open.

Defined personnel roles within the partnership ensure sustainability because those roles focus on the partnership and the relationship while those with defined personnel roles serve as liaisons between the university and district. For example, in the study conducted by Tracz et al. (2018), each partnership school had a university faculty liaison who was also a faculty member but received a course release to support the mentor teacher and teacher candidates within the partnership school.

The liaison role is a critical component to sustaining and growing the partnership relationship because the liaison keeps the line of communication open. However, Farah (2019) recognized that poor communication is the main reason school-university partnerships fail and suggests that informal and constant communications are required for a successful partnership because they provide a structure to evaluate if the partnership is working.

In the current study, the role of university and district liaisons exceeds that of university liaisons discovered by Tracz et al. (2018) because their jobs are to sustain the partnership. Having a university and district liaisons dedicated to the partnership is unique to the studied partnership. Typically, these defined roles have additional responsibilities like Tracz et al. (2018) described. However, the studied partnership is sustained by the university and district liaisons because they are consistent and work so closely together, establish partnership protocols, and maintain open communication. For

example, the university and district liaisons have scheduled walk-throughs to observe all residents and alternative teacher candidates in the district. As Farah (2019) suggested, the current study's university and district liaisons constantly communicate with each other. They built strong relationships where they openly shared problems and quickly resolved them without scheduled meetings. In addition to problem-solving, open communication has established a safe space with multiple opportunities to provide honest feedback to improve the university and district.

Sharing district personnel as a university supervisor increases the sustainability of school-university partnerships. Current literature does not address the finding of sharing personnel as a university supervisor. However, Easley et al. (2017) explored sustaining school-university partnerships as a professional learning community. They found that mentors trained as a professional learning community increased their understandings of university expectations and made them more comfortable in their roles supervising. In the current study, the university employs the district liaison as adjunct faculty to serve as the university supervisor for the district. Having district personnel serve in this capacity increases the sustainability of the school-university partnership because the district has a better understanding of the program's requirements to improve the quality of teachers produced. The element of sharing personnel has proven successful in the studied partnership. This partnership MOU outlines the need for sharing personnel. It is the university's responsibility to provide opportunities for district personnel to serve as university supervisors for the district.

Defined personnel roles, open communication, and sharing personnel are crucial elements to ensuring the sustainability of school-university partnerships (Easley et al.,

2017; Farah, 2019; Tracz et al., 2018). Defined personnel roles and sharing personnel are examples of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006). Multiple leaders facilitate open communication with defined roles, allowing for a successful and sustainable partnership (Farah, 2019; Goldring & Sims, 2005).

Research Question 3: What are the cultural characteristics of an effective school-university partnership?

The current study's findings illustrate several cultural characteristics of an effective school-university partnership. Of those findings, the following three convey key cultural elements of an effective school-university partnership: honesty, trust, and shared culture. These findings align with current literature identifying shared culture as necessary to establish trust between partners and eliminate barriers that impact the partnership's success (Farah, 2019; Goldring & Sims, 2005). Shared culture should demonstrate a strong relationship built on trust and honesty.

Honesty is a cultural characteristic of an effective school-university partnership. This finding is consistent with current literature that effective school-university partnerships should be genuine (Murtagh & Birchinall, 2018). Murtagh and Birchinall (2018) presented findings suggesting that genuinely developed school-university partnerships encourage and embrace the partnership as a true collaboration and knowledge-sharing. An effective school-university partnership has an established culture built on honesty so that leaders can honestly share their needs, concerns, and other feedback. In the current study, leaders acknowledged that the strong relationship created a safe place where stakeholders share honesty without worry. Honesty has shaped the

studied partnership in many ways; one way is sharing personnel that resulted from the district leaders being honest with the university leaders.

Effective school-university partnerships establish trust as a cultural characteristic. This finding aligns with findings presented by Sanzo and Wilson (2016) that trust is essential for a partnership to be effective and successful. They recognized trust impacts a partnership's success, and trust requires transparency, allowing for openly sharing wants and needs and quickly solving problems. Effective school-university partnerships require trust amongst the leaders and stakeholders to produce high-quality teachers together. The current study has established trust through transparency and open communication. Trust between the university and district has created several initiatives in which the district was involved in the decision-making process: the residency model, the post-baccalaureate practitioner teacher preparation program, mentor training, and, most importantly, sharing district personnel as district university supervisors.

Effective school-university partnerships develop a shared culture through mutual responsibilities. Goldring and Sims (2005) recognized shared culture as a necessary component of effective and successful partnerships. They suggested that a shared culture develops the partnership into its entity with openness and shared understanding. In the current study, the effective school-university partnership maintained a shared culture by creating the mutual goal of preparing high-quality teachers by sharing accountability, responsibilities, and decision-making. The studied partnership outlined shared commitments through the MOU. As a result, leaders in the current study viewed the partnership as one entity with shared responsibility for preparing high-quality teachers.

Honesty, trust, and shared culture are crucial cultural characteristics of an effective school-university partnership (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Murtagh & Birchinall, 2018; Sanzo & Wilson, 2016). Genuine school-university partnerships with a foundation of trust share accountability for producing high-quality teachers. University leaders trust that school leaders will provide fundamental field experiences, and school leaders trust that universities leaders will provide the knowledge and preparation candidates need to succeed in the classroom (Decker et al., 2018; Farah, 2019). It takes multiple leaders with distributed responsibilities to build trust and create honest relationships within effective school-university partnerships (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Spillane, 2006).

Recommendations for Professional Practice

The current study's findings show that teacher preparation programs and local school districts should have multiple leaders involved in school-university partnerships. Leaders should distribute partnership responsibilities amongst multiple leaders and define each role clearly. Of the defined roles involved in the partnership, the university leaders and district leaders should identify a leader who acts as a liaison dedicated to focusing on and supporting the partnership. The defined liaison roles are imperative to the partnership's success because liaisons create strong relationships that develop and sustain the partnership. School-university partnerships can avoid challenges when the university and district liaisons work closely together and maintain open communication. When problems arise, liaisons can be honest with each other to quickly resolve issues.

Leaders should provide opportunities to share personnel. University leaders should employ district personnel as adjunct faculty to serve as university supervisors for that district. The productivity of a school-university partnership increases when district

personnel serve as university supervisors for the district because the district can give quality feedback regarding program improvements. The district leaders also gain a better understanding of university requirements when personnel is shared. With a better understanding of university requirements, the district leaders know how to support teacher candidates in the district adequately. As a result, the university and district are training higher-quality teachers together.

Recommendations for Future Research

Considering the current study's findings, future research should investigate the following: school-university partnerships in urban and suburban areas, partnerships without defined personnel roles of support, teacher candidate perceptions of partnerships, in-service retention rates of effective partnerships and non-effective partnerships, K-12 student outcomes of an effective school-university partnership.

The studied partnership is with a district in a rural area. Developing and sustaining a partnership in a rural district may require different things than developing and sustaining partnerships in urban and suburban districts. Future research should explore how school-university partnerships develop and sustain in urban and suburban areas. Personnel with defined support roles within the partnership serve as crucial elements to the success of this partnership. Future research should study school-university partnerships that do not have defined personnel roles and compare that process to partnerships with defined personnel roles.

Based on the findings from the current case study, future research should analyze teacher candidates' perceptions of an effective school-university partnership as they are stakeholders in the partnership. Including teacher candidates' beliefs could determine the

candidates' successes due to an effective school-university partnership. Next, future research should study the retention rates of in-service teachers who completed clinical experiences in an effective partnership district versus in-service teachers who completed clinical experiences in a district with a less effective partnership. Future research should also explore K-12 student learning outcomes regarding an effective school-university partnership. The results of this study acknowledged the partnership and having two teachers in the classroom to the success of the student learning.

Conclusion

The findings from the current study provided essential elements that serve as the foundation for developing effective, sustainable school-university partnerships within teacher preparation programs. The elements critical to developing and sustaining an effective school-university partnership identified in the study's findings are mutual needs, mutual benefits, defined personnel roles, open communication, shared personnel, honesty, trustworthiness, and shared culture. Leaders should acknowledge that developing and sustaining effective school-university partnerships requires multiple leaders. While the findings provide a foundation for developing effective, sustainable school-university partnerships, these partnerships need more research to understand the impact. Future research should explore the effects on teacher candidate success, in-service teacher retention rates, and K-12 learning outcomes due to an effective school-university partnership.

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APPENDIX A

HUMAN USE APPROVAL LETTER



Office of Sponsored Projects

EXEMPTION MEMORANDUM

TO: Ms. Morgan Fitch and Dr. Bryan McCoy

FROM: Dr. Richard Kordal, Director of Intellectual Properties
rkordal@latech.edu

SUBJECT: HUMAN USE COMMITTEE REVIEW

DATE: July 13, 2021

TITLE: "Fostering Effective School-university Partnerships: Lessons from Leaders in a Qualitative Case Study"

NUMBER: HUC 22-002

According to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46, your research protocol is determined to be exempt from full review under the following exemption category(s): 46.104 (a)(d)(1)(2)(i)(ii).

(a) Unless otherwise required by law or by department or agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the categories in paragraph (d) of this section are exempt from the requirements of this policy, except that such activities must comply with the requirements of this section and as specified in each category.

(d) Except as described in paragraph (a) of this section, the following categories of human subjects research are exempt from this policy:

(1) Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction. This includes most research on regular and special education instructional strategies, and research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

(ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation

Thank you for submitting your Human Use Proposal to Louisiana Tech's Institutional Review Board.

APPENDIX B

POLICY DIRECTIVE

program shall demonstrate eligibility by providing, at a minimum:

1. official declaration of intent in the form of a letter from the head of the institution or organization;
2. evidence of regional accreditation status (e.g., Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) for universities only;
3. evidence that the faculty who teach courses or provide direct coaching to teacher or educational leader candidates possess sufficient knowledge, skills, training, and expertise;
4. evidence to show that the governing structure of the institution or organization endorses and financially supports a teacher or educational leader preparation unit and programs (e.g., full budget report for the implementation of programs, including internal and external sources of funding, and including both hard and soft monies);
5. evidence of an articulation agreement to transfer credit hours with another -approved teacher or educational leader preparation institution that agrees to recommend the institution's candidates for certification, as needed, for continuous progress and program completion or, for non-university providers, a plan to make students financially whole in the event of institution or program closure;
6. a description of the provider's system for monitoring and evaluating its candidates, programs, operations, and the performance of its graduates. This description must reflect how the education unit or education program assesses programs, effectiveness, and candidates as well as how the provider provides follow-up data on its graduates;
7. if the provider is currently operating or has operated in or any other state, evidence of program completers' teaching and/or leading effectiveness, including but not limited to principal survey results, state accountability system and evaluation results, and local assessment or evaluation results.

C. In order to be recommended for approval, teacher preparation programs must, at minimum:

1. be designed to develop and ensure candidates' mastery of the teacher and/or educational leader competencies required for certification. The program design must center on courses and practice experiences that integrate content, theory, and practice; expressly treat current student standards and instructional resources; and require candidates to demonstrate mastery of required competencies through a series of performance assessments and tasks:
 - a. in undergraduate programs offered by university providers, descriptions of coursework must include evidence of ample opportunity to develop content area mastery, instruments for assessing candidates' content knowledge, and procedures for remediation, if necessary. For the purposes of initial approval, an academic major in the

content area for secondary certification areas may be considered evidence of "ample opportunity;"

- b. in post-baccalaureate programs offered by university and non-university providers, descriptions of coursework or contact hours must include instruments for assessing candidates' content knowledge for teaching and/or leading, and procedures for remediation, if necessary;

2. pursuant to R.S. 17:7.1.4(a)(b), teacher preparation programs shall include the minimum number of credit hours or equivalent contact hours in the teaching of reading and literacy as follows. The required courses or training shall develop and assess candidates' mastery of applicable literacy competencies, which are found in Part CXXXI, *Bulletin Standards for State Certification of School Personnel*;

3. include required practice experiences for teacher preparation, including, at minimum, a one-year supervised residency in a school setting. In addition to the one-year residency, the candidate must be provided actual practice experience in classroom settings within schools with varied socioeconomic characteristics. The requirements for the one-year residency and for required practice experiences for undergraduate and post-baccalaureate preparation programs are described in detail in Chapter 7 of this bulletin. Evidence of quality must include, but is not limited to, the provider's commitment to:
 - a. recruit, develop, and evaluate clinical faculty who model effective practical teaching knowledge and skills; and
 - b. ensure alignment of program faculty, residency school site administrator, and residency school site mentor teacher expectations for candidates' development and performance;

4. be jointly developed and administered in partnership with one or more local educational agencies in which candidates complete the one-year residency. Evidence of partnership shall include, but not be limited to, a formal agreement, such as a memorandum of understanding or memorandum of agreement, that includes:
 - a. roles of and responsibilities of program faculty, LEA leaders, residency school site administrators, and residency school site mentor teachers;
 - b. criteria and process for residency school site selection, development, and evaluation of effectiveness, to occur in concert with LEA leadership;
 - c. targets, criteria, and process for mentor teacher recruitment, development, and evaluation, to occur in concert with LEA leadership;
 - d. protocols for administering assessments of candidates' teaching skill in cooperation with the residency school site administrator or his/her designee during the one-year residency and in general alignment with the partner LEA's teacher evaluation system pursuant to the requirements in teacher preparation/certification/evaluation,

Bulletin —Regulations for the Evaluation and Assessment of School Personnel; and

e. protocols for the secure exchange of data relative to program improvement and evaluation.

D. The shall utilize evaluation tools to conduct qualitative assessments of teacher and/or educational leader proposals to make initial approval recommendations. The evaluation tools must align to the requirements set forth in this bulletin, including, but not limited, to state standards for teacher preparation outlined in Chapter 1 of this bulletin.

APPENDIX C

TIF COHORT 5 GRANT PROJECT

Contractual	\$5,076,000	-\$560,000	\$4,516,000	\$4,166,000	\$899,914	\$5,065,914	\$3,566,000	-\$60,386	\$3,505,614
Other	\$1,355,000	-\$465,000	\$890,000	\$1,355,000	-\$475,000	\$880,000	\$1,055,000	-\$475,000	\$580,000
Total Direct Costs	\$12,618,155	\$816,964	\$13,435,119	\$10,667,405	\$0	\$10,667,405	\$8,072,655	\$0	\$8,072,655

Year 1 Adjustment Rationale	
Personnel	<p>Personnel changes were driven mostly by the hire date of staff, as well as the hire date of the LEA Talent Pipeline Lead (the Talent Pipeline Lead which was implemented in Oct 2016, but hiring continued through Spring 2017 with a start date of July 1, 2017). Additionally, realigned support provided to TIF districts, resulting in a decrease in the number of people serving TIF districts, but an increase in the amount of time for each staff member. The resulting changes did not impact the level of support to all LEAs.</p> <p>Mentor teachers are defined as teachers who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ in an undergraduate teacher program, host a resident and co-teach with them for the full school year. ▪ in a post-baccalaureate program, coach residents weekly by reviewing instructional plans, materials, assessments and student work samples and lead frequent observation/feedback cycles. The mentor/teacher ratio for each campus is 1:3. <p>Personnel adjustments for year one are a result of several factors, which include an alignment of mentor teacher stipends to major policy changes in October of 2016. The approved policy and a fiscal plan relative to year-long residency to take effect in July 2018. Fiscal guidance for mentor stipends was provided by the , in collaboration with the , based on the recommendations of educators, preparation program faculty, and other stakeholders gathered through events, pilots, surveys, focus groups, and forums.</p> <p>The TIF 5 budget stipend reduction from \$4000 to \$1000 for mentor teacher stipends is being requested based on sustainability concerns brought forth by LEA leads. Also, due to the timing of the TIF 5 application submission in July 2016 and the policy changes in October 2016, policy changes could not be accounted for in the TIF 5 grant application. In October 2016, approved a \$1,000 stipend to be paid to mentor teachers who host year-long residents. Policy changes generate an additional stipend of \$1,000 for mentor teachers in TIF LEAs; doubling the stipend of their non-TIF counterparts.</p> <p>For the Teacher prep position, upon the departures of the Executive Director of Educator Preparation and Director of Field Support, the merged the positions to create the Director of Teacher Preparation. The role is primarily focused on TIF districts with an aim to adequately support teacher preparation shifts.</p>
Fringe	Fringe rates were adjust to reflect department standards per adjusted personnel costs (48% staff, 30% district staff)
Travel	No changes
Equipment	The Department identified an alternate funding source for CIS servers and enhancements. The CIS servers and enhancements are now packaged within a broader enterprise data system overhaul.
Supplies	No changes

PROPOSED FINANCIAL SUPPORTS FROM [REDACTED] FOR TRANSITION (2016-2019)

Current [REDACTED] members hold office through 2019. Therefore, the [REDACTED] will recommend to [REDACTED] approval of a transitional financial plan and financial commitments through that term.

These transition costs can be covered through [REDACTED]-approved allocations using a combination of state and federal funding streams that can be sustained for the duration of this [REDACTED] term. Federal funding streams identified for this proposal are state set-aside funds, not funds that are passed through to districts

The total estimated commitment through 2018-2019 is \$7.3 million. The allocations may be made by [REDACTED], as recommended by [REDACTED].

Funds will be allocated for the following:

- \$2.8 million for **program administration** costs – all or part of a \$65,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) over three years to facilitate the transition from traditional student teaching to yearlong residency. Current median FTE salary paid by universities is \$50,000.
- \$1.2 million for **mentor compensation** – a minimum rate of \$1,000 per year per mentor based on the median stipend amount estimated by study participants. Current stipends paid by fiscal impact workgroup participants range from \$0 to \$300.
- \$2.5 million for **resident compensation** – a minimum rate of \$2,000 per year per resident based on the potential estimated loss of part-time wages for one semester (\$7.25 minimum hourly wage, 18 weeks, 15 hours per week).

\$700,000 for **additional costs** not captured in the standardized formula:

- High Cost Needs Pool: \$400,000 to be awarded via application. Allowable expenses include:
 - Transition coordination costs in partner school systems (e.g., 0.25 FTE district leader who coordinates with the preparation provider)
 - Faculty time and/or travel expenses that are not captured in the transition funding formula
- Mentor training: \$200,000 for training with experts
- Provider support: \$100,000 for support from experts on topics such as partnership development, residency design, and use of data for program improvement.

Each institution will be able to make a non-competitive funding request of the [REDACTED] in fall 2016 based on the transition formulas listed here.

Additionally, the [REDACTED] has been awarded a \$66.8 million Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant through the federal government to strengthen the teaching profession and expand access to excellent teachers and leaders in rural schools. Funds from the [REDACTED]'s grant will be dedicated to teacher residents, teacher mentors, and teacher preparation providers, as well as compensation incentives for educators at all levels in rural school systems² that chose to participate in the grant through 2021. [REDACTED] received the largest award of any state and will begin grant making in 2016-2017.

APPENDIX D

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Memorandum of Understanding

This agreement is entered into by _____ (Hereinafter District) and _____

The District and the Teacher Preparation Program (TPP) at the _____ agree to enter into a collaboration to improve educator preparation by achieving mutual goals that will benefit students, teacher candidates, and experienced teachers. Through this partnership, both the District and _____ will work to provide meaningful opportunities for professional development and teacher preparation to both teachers and teacher candidates with the end goal of improving student achievement.

Collaborative Goals:

1. Design and implement within each District a district-based clinically intensive teacher education program inclusive of a year-long residency with the aim of mentoring TPP candidates preparing to be teachers (teacher candidates) to become rated as highly competent in their subject area, pedagogy, and by the second year of teaching, to produce student achievement gain scores equal to or greater than the district average.
2. Establish a framework for transferring de-identified District student data between the District and TPP for the purposes of monitoring and evaluating the preparation and effectiveness of _____ Teacher Candidates and Completers working in District.

Teacher Preparation Provider's Responsibilities:

1. Screen and recruit talented and committed Teacher Candidates into competency-based teacher preparation programs.
2. Offer district competency-based teacher education programs in certification areas of expressed District need (e.g., Elementary, Secondary Content, and Special Education)
3. Use Teacher Candidate teaching competency data (i.e. information about subject-area, pedagogy, impact on formative and summative student achievement) to modify and adjust teacher preparation programs to better foster graduates' mastery of competencies. Teaching competency data will include the use of video-capture as one mechanism by which improvement of teacher candidates' instructional practices is achieved. In recognition of the sensitivity of this practice, video of candidates' instruction will be captured under the district media permission (see C.4. below) in the following manner:
 - a. Capture of video. TPP will:
 - i. Center the Teacher Candidate as the focal point of the video; and
 - ii. Unless otherwise required, the camera will be positioned in the classroom in such a manner so as to minimize capture of District students' faces, though some exposure is likely. The captured video will not be published.
 - iii. Direct its Teacher Candidates to verify with Mentor Teachers (District teachers) under whom TPP Teacher Candidate work) whether any students have circumstances forbidding recording – and in such cases, the student or the camera will be positioned in such a way so as to not capture this student in the recording; however they will remain in the classroom.
 - b. Handling and storage of video capture. TPP will:
 - i. The teacher candidate will use a chosen platform, agreed upon by the district, for instructional video recordings.
 - ii. Instructional video recordings will be deleted by the teacher candidate after evaluations are complete for the semester.
 - c. Use of video for instructional purposes. TPP will upload video to the secure video platform site:
 - i. For purpose of self-observation and self-evaluation of instructional practices;
 - ii. To be used by TPP faculty members for purposes of observation and evaluation of the teacher candidates' instructional skill;
 - iii. To be used for purposes of program evaluation;
 - iv. To possibly be used by TPP researchers to extract data relevant to instructional competencies of teacher candidates, contingent on Institutional Research Board Human Subjects Committee review and

- approval; and
- v. In no case will images of students appear in a public forum for purposes of self, candidate, or program evaluation, or for purposes of research presentation.
4. TPP will require all teacher preparation faculty who teach and/or evaluate teacher candidates to be trained and successfully certified on the performance-based rubric on an annual basis. This action fosters program rigor and significantly increases the probability of inter-rater reliability.
 5. TPP will review and revise as needed, the structure, scope and sequence of teacher preparation program *courses* and *embedded assessments* to ensure that teacher candidates are making expected benchmark progress toward the ultimate program-level outcomes. This curriculum work will ensure program intentional integration among the state's K-12 academic standards, the program's core teaching concepts (e.g., the science of learning) and overall framework of teaching excellence (e.g., best practices or high-leverage teaching practices).
 6. TPP will enact the use of YEAR-LONG student teaching (residency) experiences.
 7. TPP will provide for a Field Experience & Resident Coordinator, a person to serve as the education preparation program coordinator and district-program liaison.
 8. Work with District personnel to collaboratively select, train, support, and evaluate District teachers serving as Mentor Teachers to Teacher Candidates.
 9. Require its Teacher Candidates to abide by the rules of conduct contained within the TPP Student Handbook and the District Policies and Procedures. In the event of non-academic student misconduct that violates criminal law or requires disciplinary action, all applicable District and TPP policies will be followed.
 10. TPP will apply for Resident and Practitioner Certificate through the _____ and notify districts when certificates are issued.
 11. TPP will give local placement priority to the district in which candidates live.
 12. TPP will host a Residency Placement Fair each semester to provide recruitment opportunities for partnered districts.
 13. TPP will contract with _____ employee who meets qualifications to serve as _____ University Supervisor for all _____ residents completing residency two.

School District Responsibilities:

The District will inform parents of the teacher assessment activity, and explain the measures taken to specifically avoid video capturing their students.} District will:

1. Collaborate with TPP to identify schools, principals and up to _____ Mentor Teachers to participate in the Program's initial _____ teacher preparation initiative, and support fidelity of implementation;
2. If space is available, provide a school-based classroom to be used for TPP Teacher Candidate coursework that is sufficient in size to hold up to 30 Teacher Candidates and equipped with all the technologies commonly available in most classrooms within designated school building;
3. Share and analyze student achievement/assessments/benchmark data with TPP for the purpose of improving student learning and for program improvement; Principals or principal designee will evaluate each Resident in their district who is on a practitioner license.
4. Actively supervise, mentor and evaluate Teacher Candidates using TPP processes and performance assessment tools;
5. Actively participate in program evaluation to support PreK-12th grade student achievement and in-service teacher and Teacher Candidate education program effectiveness;
6. Provide opportunities for the Teacher Candidates to attend district-level and school-level professional development;
7. Incorporate on its parent-permission form that media coverage includes the use of video-capture technology in classrooms for purposes of evaluating and improving the instructional practice of TPP Teacher Candidates;} and
9. Permit a yearly administration of K-12 student perceptions about completers (graduates of initial programs) performance, utilizing a Student Perception Survey (SPS), in a manner that permits linkage of student responses.
10. Facilitate completion of substitute application and background checks (according to district policy) with ALL teacher residents placed in district.
11. Provide candidates with instructor access to online platforms used in the classroom (Google Classroom, Flip Grid, Nearpod, etc). This will allow candidates to actively participate in co-planning and teaching in a virtual environment.

12. For each teacher candidate in the list, District will provide to TPP (if available) up to twice yearly, the following data fields associated with K-12 students assigned to the identified Mentor Teachers: ***Provide a data table containing the following information about District students taught by Mentor Teachers working with Program Teacher Candidates.***
- a. Ethnic code
 - b. Gender
 - c. Economic disadvantage code (free and reduced lunch)
 - d. Special education status
 - e. Cumulative grade point average
 - f. Student gain/growth score for previous two years (if available)
 - g. District Assessment Test scores by subject
 - h. District Assessment Test scores by standard (criteria)
 - i. State Assessment Test scores by subject (LEAP / NEAP/ ELDA / EOC)
 - j. State Assessment Test scores by standard (criteria) (LEAP / NEAP/ ELDA / EOC)
 - k. Limited English status
 - l. G&T status
 - m. At-risk indicator
 - n. Mobility (moves per year)
 - o. Disciplinary counts
 - p. Attendance counts
 - q. Tardy counts
 - r. Campus code
13. This list will be created in the following manner so that student demographic and performance data will be de-identified
- a. District will take two steps in de-identifying the data to be transferred to TPP ITD:
 - i. Requested will data will be consolidated into a single table, identifying students by their District student ID
 - ii. District will generate a unique, random number to be used to identify students in data exchanges with TPP.
 - iii. District will transfer the de-identified data to TPP ITD, that will then provide data to TPP.
 - iv. District, as the custodian of the confidential data will maintain translation tables, and will not share with TPP. Districts will have the only ability to match individual student identity with the data transferred.
14. Provide to TPP all of the data fields itemized in #10 (if needed) for the District students' of TPP teacher candidates if they are hired by District beginning for the school year _ and extending to the termination date of this MOU. Additional Provisions:
- a. If available, District will also provide value added scores for this group of teachers, and all detailed value added data collected for this teacher, as defined by the project leadership group.
 - b. If possible, permit TPP to administer Student Perception Survey to District students in the classes taught by teacher candidates ultimately hired by the district.
 - c. The data compiled for teacher candidates hired by district may be delivered separately, but in the same manner described in the aforementioned data exchange.
15. Prior to working with District students in the classroom TPP, will inform its Teacher Candidates of any requirements to submit to any security screens imposed by District, including a fingerprint background check.

Mutual Responsibilities:

1. Collaboratively recruit prospective future-teachers to the TPP; Including recruiting uncertified teachers for MAT and Post Baccalaureate programs at
2. Collect and share data that enable the partnership to evaluate the TPP graduate impact on student achievement and success;
3. Given the increasing number of Teacher Candidates using personal laptop computers with wireless capability, the TPP and SD will collaborate to find ways to provide wireless access in a manner that is mutually acceptable to TPP and the SD;
4. Collaboratively work together to plan and provide interventions to Teacher Candidates who are identified as in need of support. The TPP and the district will follow policy as outlined in the Teacher Candidate and Resident Handbook.
5. Actively participate in shared governance for the collaboration by attending Governance Meetings at least once per semester.

APPENDIX E

INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The initial interview questions that were refined through alpha and beta testing were:

1. How can effective school-university partnerships be established and sustained?
2. How has the partnership developed and evolved over the past three years?
3. How can partnership sustainability be ensured?
4. Describe the relationship that developed between the district and the program as a result of this partnership.
5. What role do you think you have had in this partnership?
6. Is there anything you would change to improve this partnership?

APPENDIX F

FINAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The final interview questions that resulted from alpha and beta testing were:

1. What role do you have within this partnership, and how long have you been engaged?
2. What are the benefits of being engaged in this partnership?
3. How was this partnership established, and who were the stakeholders involved?
4. How has the partnership evolved over the past three years?
5. How do you measure the effectiveness of this partnership?
6. How has this partnership been sustained?
7. What crucial elements of this partnership lead to its success?
8. Who are the people needed to maintain the success of this partnership?
9. What three words would you use to describe this partnership?
10. Outside of increasing the teacher pipeline, what is the value of this partnership?
11. How could this partnership be improved?
12. Why is this partnership important?