Perceptions of the Assistant Principal Position from School Principals in Puerto Rico

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Polo and Mary, to my brother Erick, and to my sister Marycell for providing unconditional love. To all the dedicated teachers within my family, thank you (GRACIAS) for all the love and care provided to help me learn, and many others, that education is a major key to success in life. To my Aunt Monse for allowing me to see her collegiate diploma written in Latin from the University of Puerto Rico, first in the family, provoking curiosity in me, at an early age, to pursue this degree. To all that walked with me through countless hours of work and study. To my friend Mario Acosta for inviting me to see Washington, DC in the summer of 1994 and to later join the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) Summer Internship in 1995, making DC my home for 15 years. To my favorite teachers from public school, thanks for your guidance and care:

1st Grade	Ms. Miranda
2nd Grade	Ms. Cruz
3rd Grade	Ms. Cintrón
4th Grade	Ms. Corps
5th Grade	Ms. Rivera
6th Grade	Ms. G. Rivera
7th Grade	Ms. Eliza & Ms. Rosario
8th Grade	Ms. Rivera
9th Grade	Ms. Aguilú
10th Grade	Ms. Vega
11th Grade	Ms. Santiago
12th Grade	Mr. Morales

Finally, to Stella Maria, education is one key you will always have to access incredible paths to enrich yourself. Education cannot be taken away. Just remember, there are no dreams you cannot accomplish and always remember to follow your heart. *Tio te ama, Stella!*

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Abstract of Dissertation

Perceptions of the Assistant Principal Position from School Principals in Puerto Rico

At the time I conducted this research study, the Puerto Rico public school system did not include an AP position in their school leadership structure. Using quantitative descriptive statistics research, I conducted this study to assess the knowledge and perceptions of PR school principals regarding adding an assistant principal (AP) position into the PR public school system. I chose a Distributed Leadership Practice (Spillane, 2006) theoretical framework as the lens for the study. In the research study, I measured the willingness of school principals to delegate or distribute certain administrative, managerial, and instructional leadership duties to an AP. For the literature review, I investigated three primary factors described in a conceptual framework: (1) The School Principal Role and Responsibilities, (2) The School Assistant Principal Role and Responsibilities, and (3) The Puerto Rico School System's History and Evolution. The literature review revealed that the AP position could serve as a training field for principals, and that APs are a resourceful support to school principals (Barnett et al., 2012; Oliver, 2005).

The study had two primary research questions: (1) What are the perceptions of serving principals in Puerto Rico regarding the potential role and responsibilities of an assistant principal? (2) What is the degree of understanding and knowledge of serving principals in Puerto Rico regarding the roles and responsibilities of an assistant principal? For data collection, I used an electronic survey sent to a population of 1,292 school

principals in public schools, with 486 responses at a 37.6% response rate. I designed the 24 question survey with demographic, Likert scale, and open-ended questions.

The data results revealed a statistically significant rate of support (52.1%) for delegating a portion of the principals' administrative and instructional leadership duties to an assistant principal. The study's results answered the research questions. The findings supported adding the AP position into the PR school system using a leadership practice model (Spillane, 2006). School principals named three primary responsibilities AP's could share: administrative responsibilities, support with instructional leadership, and student discipline. In addition, findings revealed females more inclined to delegate instructional leadership than males and that principals with more years of service in the PR school system supported adding an AP position into the PR school leadership structure. In a challenging school environment, the assistant school principal becomes an asset for the school principal, if there is synergy and coupling of vision for change and improvement shared by both school leaders (Morgan, 2018).

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Chapter 1: Introduction

At the time of this study, the Puerto Rico public school system did not include an assistant principal position in their school leadership structure. This research study revealed insight on the knowledge and perceptions of school principals in the Puerto Rico Public School system regarding incorporating the assistant principal (AP) position into PR schools. The data results revealed that principals favored the addition of an assistant principal position to assist principals with administrative duties and instructional leadership. As researcher, I chose a distributed leadership practice lens as the theoretical framework for the study and possible model for the delegation of duties to an AP (Spillane, 2006).

In Puerto Rico, the assistant principal position never transitioned into the public school system, although it was mentioned in the 1999 Reform Law #149, Section 2.17. For reasons unknown, either political, social, or economic, Puerto Rico did not incorporate the AP position into the PR school system. Puerto Rico became a war trophy after the 1898 Hispanic-Cuban-American war. Subsequently, political efforts in the Island supported the creation of the Department of Education under the 1900 Foraker Law, passed by Congress (Foraker Act of 1900). In 1952, the US Congress granted self-governing powers to the Island colony, helping to move educational access for all. The most recent Education Reform Bill took place in 2018, with passage of Law #85 (*Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico 2018*).

Although the burnout rate of principals and teachers is unknown, Benitez-Canales (2013) found school principals in Puerto Rico overworked due to excessive managerial workloads. This resulted in a high degree of personnel discouragement, mental fatigue,

and a low job performance. The report, Principal Attrition and Mobility: Results From the 2016–17 Principal Follow up Survey, found that amid all public school principals in 2015–16, approximately 82% remained at the same school during the following school year (known as "stayers"), 6 percent moved to a different school (known as "movers"), and 10 percent left the principalship (known as "leavers").

Regarding distributed leadership, it is viewed as a growing property of a group of interacting individuals, which can include the assistant principal (Bennett, Harvey, Wise and Woods, 2004). Distributed leadership activities are characterized and enacted within and by the group, rather than by individuals performing prescribed roles. The AP position often becomes the entry level position for school administration in the United States, particularly in secondary schools (Searby, Browne-Ferrigno, & Wang, 2017). Barnett et al. (2012) stated that the AP position serves as a training field for principals and that APs are a resourceful support for school principals (Oliver, 2005). Therefore, under distributed leadership practice (Spillane, 2006), the AP serves an important role in educational organizations and eventually move upward into the principalship (Hooley & Marshall, 2006).

The Reform Law from 2018 (Law #85), Article 2.09, states that the school director will report directly to the Regional Superintendent. Article 2.10 list 27 different roles or responsibilities attached to the principalship. The school counselor, the social worker, or a "teacher leader" (note that this last position does not exist in the PRDE) in many instances serves as the "go-to-person" to support the school principal. These school employees step in and take care of the school if the principal is off the school premises. Unconsciously, using distributed leadership as an evolving property of

collaborative individuals (Bennett et al, 2003). However, unclear social and legal implications exist if something goes wrong while performing principal duties. Traditionally in PR many contracts have clauses that state, “and perform duties as directed by the supervisor”, which might be the case why other school leaders perform temporary principal duties. From the literature, assistant principals support the principal in administrative, management, and instructional leadership duties, as their key role (Barnett et al., 2012; Normore, 2003; Oliver, 2005). In PR, principals sometimes delegate duties to teachers or staff out of necessity. It is worth mentioning that these AP responsibilities may be performed without full legal authority, training, or additional monetary compensation.

The assistant principal role in 2017 matched current principalship leadership with managerial, instructional, budget, discipline, community relations, and socio-cultural duties (Harris & Lowery, 2004). Although, a study by Weller and Weller (2002) found that the majority of the responses by APs identified duties related to discipline and attendance. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) described the role of the assistant principal as aiding the principal in the overall administration of the school (U. S. Department of Labor).

Using Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership practice theory, I explained how the assistant principal role can be used to strengthen the PR principal position through the delegation of administrative, managerial, and instructional leadership duties. As a result, instituting the AP position could help strengthen the principal position and school effectiveness in PR schools. I found the AP findings in the study consistent with the

findings in the literature on APs supporting principals (Barnett et al., 2012; Oliver, 2005; Weller & Weller, (2002).

As of 2020, the assistant principal position did not exist in the Puerto Rico Public School's educational leadership structure. In this research study, I explored how current school principals perceived the assistant principal position and how the principal position could be enhanced if PR added the AP position in it's public schools.

The Island of Puerto Rico is a unified educational system with headquarters in the capital city of San Juan. From there, the Secretary of Education oversees the entire public system. The Island is divided into 7 different districts including San Juan, Bayamón, Caguas, Humacao, Ponce, Mayagüez and Arecibo. The PRDE could benefit from having a two leader structure, the principal and the assistant school principal, to manage and develop a plan to effectively enhance the administration and the learning experience of students and the working condition of the school's staff.

In Puerto Rico, the school principal is referred to as school director. Although, for this research study, I respectfully used the term school principal, instead of school director, to relate to the current scholarly body of knowledge and research on principals and assistant principals.

Statement of the Problem

At the time of this study in 2017, the assistant principal (AP) role did not exist in the Puerto Rico (PR) school system; further, the assistant principal position was not mentioned in the new Educational Reform Law of 2018 (Ley Núm. 85 de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico de 2018). In addition, no evidence existed that requests for the assistant principal position had been granted by the approval authorities, even under

previous Law #149 (Ley Núm. 149 Ley Orgánica del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico de 1999). According to Benítez-Canales (2013), "Not having an AP might add a burden to the school principal's role in Puerto Rico, already requiring long working hours and added extra pressure from the lack of administrative support and other community demands" (p.8). From my research findings, adding an assistant principal position to the PR school leadership structure to share administrative, managerial, and instructional duties could help principals govern their schools more effectively. Additionally, if the AP position was created, and added to the school structure, the PRDE could benefit from a pool of experienced and groomed assistant principal ready to step into school principal vacancies resulting from retirement, resignations, or attrition.

If instituted, the AP position could allow more time for principals to pursue administrative and instructional leadership and provide more time for handling school community demands. This research sought to understand school principals' perceptions about the AP position and how it could potentially improve the PR school system's leadership structure.

Over decades, the principalship experience transformation and impact by economic, demographic, technological, and global factors (Levine, 2006). As the nation made the transition from an industrial to a global information-based economy, the economy and governmental infrastructure around Puerto Rico, including it's schools, experienced a constant state of change. School principals assumed responsibilities for managing the entire school environment and overseeing the learning process for student success. Moreover, school leaders responded to global, social, economic and educational changes, including the ways assistant principals could be used to help principals

transform and enhance leadership in their schools. As the role and responsibilities of the assistant principal varies nationally (Morgan, 2018), it is unknown how many PR school principals had prior firsthand experience or exposure about the assistant principal position. Some principals came to the Island with prior experiences from different states and countries that may have used assistant principals in previous school systems, while others did not have AP experience. According to Morgan (2008), the assistant principal's leadership is vital to the success of schools and students. Thus, Morgan's research provided credibility to my research findings when looking at the efficacy of the assistant principal's support of the principalship.

Purpose Statement

I conducted a quantitative descriptive research study to uncover how school principals perceived the potential role and responsibilities of assistant principals for the PR public school system. The study did not take into consideration prior knowledge principals knew or understood about the assistant principal role and responsibilities as a prerequisite to participate in the survey. I asked survey questions designed to prompt principal participants to review past managerial, administrative, and instructional leadership experiences, as well as envision future changes. By reflecting on past experiences, each school principal could consider the most pressing needs experienced as a principal. As a result, the school principal would exercise some form of Futurism. Futurism is about goals, purpose, a path, how to get there, the problems, and the opportunities encountered on that journey (Sanal, 2003).

Research Questions

I investigated the following two primary research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of serving principals in Puerto Rico regarding the potential role and responsibilities of an assistant principal?

2. What is the degree of understanding and knowledge of serving principals in Puerto Rico regarding the roles and responsibilities of an assistant principal?

I added two subquestions to investigate how serving school principals view delegation of duties and job qualifications of assistant principals.

A. Which areas of work will the school principal in Puerto Rico most likely delegate to an assistant principal?

B. What educational requirements, experience, and time in service, will the school principal in Puerto Rico desire to fill an assistant principal position?

The answers to these questions could provide the framework for potential policy changes, new organizational structures, and support for the school principal within the Puerto Rico public education system.

Statement of Potential Significance

This research study investigated principal perceptions on adding the assistant principal role into the Puerto Rico school leadership system and contributed to the body of scholarly knowledge on the assistant principal position. In addition, the research contributed to future policy changes in Puerto Rico's public school system to improve educational leadership capacities. Further, adding an assistant principal position could have a positive managerial and administrative impact on school principals, using distributed leadership practice (Spillane 2006). Therefore, distributed leadership (DL) in public schools could promote concerted actions by a combination and interaction of individual interests and capacities to produce outcomes beyond those that could be achieved by individuals alone (Davison et al., 2014). One of the strengths of distributed leadership emphasized the potential for concentrated and distributed forms of leadership

to be mutually supportive between the principal and the assistant principal (Bierly & Doyle, 2016; Bolden, Gosling, & Petrov, 2008). The distributed leadership form of leadership resists representations of heroic leaders and passive followers and implies that boundaries of leadership are inclusive rather than exclusive (Davison et al., 2014). Professionally, since the assistant principal position did not exist in the educational system of Puerto Rico, this study had the potential to help shape the development of such a position for the Island. Additionally, the research findings could serve as the future foundation for planning, professional development, school improvement, and student achievement, based on the role and responsibilities shared between the school principal and the assistant principal. Personally, as an active member of the Puerto Rico community, I supported the research to help improve the school community.

Results and recommendations from this study shed light on the assistant principal position for the Island schools and how local school principals perceived using AP's in their organizational structure. Additionally, the school principal's voice provided an intimate, vivid picture of the administrative pressure principals felt on the job. The creation and development of a robust assistant principal position for Puerto Rico's schools would be a steppingstone towards the principalship, potentially creating a pipeline towards the principal position.

By providing current principals a voice, through this research study, the data collected empowered the Puerto Rico Department of Education's (PRDE) leadership and government to understand school principals perceptions of the assistant principal position and what roles and responsibilities principals could delegate to the AP. Also, sharing

administrative duties with an assistant principal could create more time for principals to engage in educational leadership matters.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

For the study, I chose a Distributed Leadership Practice (Spillane, 2006) lens to deepen the understanding and possible intersection of the principal and assistant principal leadership relationship in Puerto Rico's public schools. According to Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond (2004), the distributed leadership perspective, from the human side, invites us to move past individual activity, taking into consideration how the material, cultural, and social situations impact human activity and take into consideration what the actor knows, believes, and does in a particular setting to produce a final product. The entire school benefits when the skills and insight of every member of the school team are utilized, and the power is shared (Hutton, 2014). Therefore, a distributed, collaborative, collegial, and cooperative relationship between the lead principal and the assistant principal could be established and conscientiously nurtured. The heart of leadership has to do with a person who believes, values, dreams about, and is committed to that person's vision (Sergiovanni, 2006). In reference to distributed leadership, in today's school environment, leaders have the job of managing our schools, and of leading the system through an era of extreme social change, requiring fundamental rethinking of what schools do and how they do it (Gronn, 2000; Levine, 2006).

A principal who wants to be successful must know how to distribute leadership to assistant principals, having the opportunity to develop an array of skills that prepares AP's for the principalship (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Levin-Epstein, 2016). So, while the role of the assistant principal is multidimensional, the school principal should be making

deliberate, intentional strategies and/or activities to broaden the scope, the vision, and the experiences of the assistant principal. According to Hallinger (2011), political developments at the local and national level, increased accountability standards, and changed demographics in schools have led to stress the role of school principals in leading instructional improvement.

The term "distributed leadership" is believed to have been used for the first time by Gibb (1954), an Australian psychologist, who drew attention to the dynamics of leadership influence processes as they influenced the work of different groups (Bolden, 2011). Gibb suggested that leadership should not be viewed as the monopoly of the individual, but rather as shared functions among individuals (Harris, et al., 2007). In school organizations, both formal and informal groups of school administrators are constantly interacting, resulting in shared patterns of communication, learning and action. It is through these interactions, in the school, that individuals, such as principals develop action maps (Bolman and Deal, 2017). Each member in the organization possesses a frame of reference consisting of values, concepts, and ideas affecting what they accept or ignore and how they interpret those experiences (Senge, 2006). In this context, distributed leadership emerged as a shared practice by individuals seeking to address organizational issues and problems (Harris 2008; Menon, 2013). A distributed leadership conceptual framework is based on how distributed leadership is perceived from the point of view of the school principal. It involves two aspects: the aspect of whom and how. The aspect of whom involves multiple individuals and is not restricted to those at the top of the organizational hierarchy, school principal and assistant principal. In this framework, leadership practice is the outcome of the interaction of school leaders,

followers, and their situations (Diamond & Spillane, 2007). From a distributed perspective once more, leadership is a system of practice, comprised of a collection of interacting components, including leaders, followers and situations (Spillane, 2006).

Conceptual Map

My literature review investigated three primary factors that informed my research study described in a conceptual framework map (Maxwell, 2013). The three factors cover: (1) The School Principal, Role and Responsibilities, (2) The School Assistant Principal Role and Responsibilities, and (3) The Puerto Rico School System's History and Evolution.

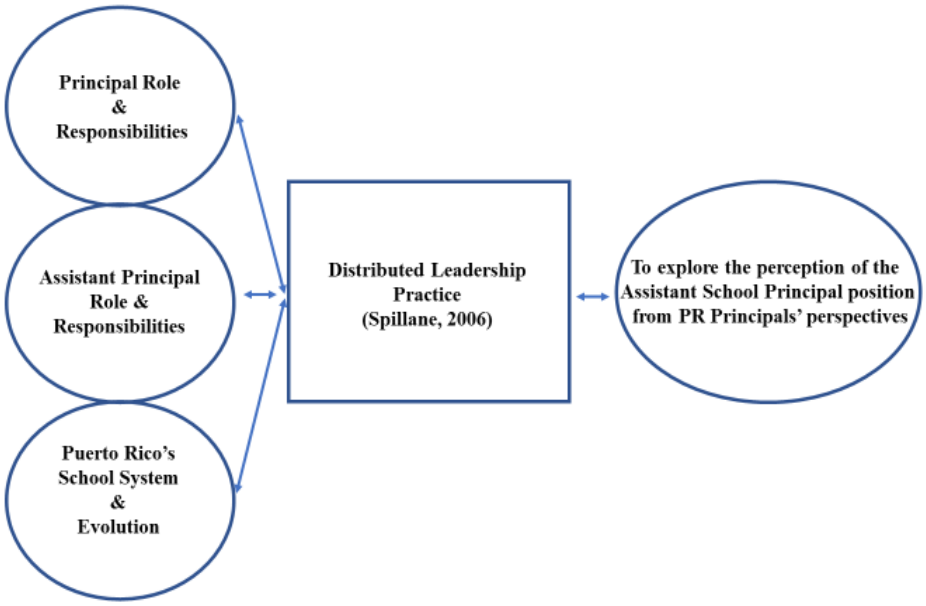

Figure 1. Conceptual map

According to Hall (2008) in his research of the assistant principal and preparation for the principal position, assistant principals were most influenced by their principal. More emphasis could be placed on collaboration efforts between the school principal and

the assistant principal to ensure stronger capacity for future school leaders (Hall, 2008). Hoffman (2013) found that school principals engaged in over 43 different responsibilities. The use of distributed leadership practice would allow school principals to fulfill their expected roles, fulfill their responsibilities, and maximize their administrative goal (Harris, 2014).

While the school principal assumes the role of leader, the assistant principal, based on the duties performed or the job expectations in the United States or abroad, view the rest of the school community as the school's manager (Weller & Weller, 2002). Traditional methods of school management divide conceptually into two main branches: operational and instructional. Operational leadership, with corporate management methods, focuses on the principal as the most vital player in a school (Petrides, Jimes, & Karaglani, 2014). Although, the assistant principal in the United States educational system forges a significant leadership role that is often ignored (Matthews & Crow, 2003). Therefore, in this study, I provided insight on how local (PR) school principals perceived the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal using a distributed leadership practice theory conceptual framework (Spillane, 2006).

Summary of the Methodology

I used a quantitative methodology for this study. Using descriptive statistics, I used a survey instrument to collect quantitative data on trends, attitudes, and opinions from a principal population in Puerto Rico, at a particular point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Survey designs help researchers answer three types of questions: descriptive questions, questions about the relationship between variables, and questions about predictive relationships between variables overtime.

data collection. I developed the research survey as a questionaire to collect descriptive data; it includes several open-ended questions. I used an electronic survey as the data collection instrument. The survey, sent via email, proved beneficial because of the economy of the design and the rapid turnaround in data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, I used a survey, which was the fastest option to collect data from principal participants and cover the entire public system on the Island, considering time and effort. Puerto Rico is an island 100 miles long by 35 miles wide, with a topography that varies from coastal valleys to totally mountainous municipalities. The main mountain chain crosses the island from East to West, cutting through the center of the Island and making most of the municipalities rural; therefore, access to participants was possible, but traveling for face-to-face interviews would be costly and time consuming.

I bound this study to all serving school principals in the Puerto Rico Department of Education system in the spring of 2017. I surveyed principals via email using *SurveMonkey* (www.surveymonkey.com). To conduct this study, I requested support from the PRDE leadership, IRB permission from the George Washington University, and permission from the Puerto Rico IRB. Additionally, I requested support from the local association of School Directors (principals) known as ONDE-"Organización Nacional De Directores de Escuelas de Puerto Rico" (www.ondepr.org), and the "Organización de Directores Y Administradores Escolares de Puerto Rico." ONDE is an active nonprofit organization representing working school principals, maintaining its pulse on all issues related to the principalship on the Island. School principals answered the same pool of

questions, regardless of their time in service or their school grade (elementary, junior high or high school).

data analysis. Using the SPSS data research system, I analyzed data to develop perception and knowledge trends and patterns collected from the Puerto Rico school principals. Cole (2013) states that when analyzing an entire population, instead of a sample, descriptive statistics can be used to reveal what an investigator seeks to learn. The open-ended questions in the survey provided a route to capture perception and knowledge data; these questions permitted the survey participants to answer freely as there were no pre-existing response categories (Fowler, 2009).

Epistemology

For the study, I chose a social constructivism epistemology (Jean Piaget, 1896-1980). Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society constructing knowledge based on this understanding (Derry, 1999; McMahon 1997). Guiding principles of social constructivism are developed as knowledge is constructed throughout human activity and individuals create meaning through their interactions (Vygotsky, 1980). This study provided a voice to principals as they examined the possible role and responsibilities to be delegated or distributed to a potential assistant. Vygotsky (1980) stated that in a social constructivism learning environment effective learning happens only through interactive processes of discussion, negotiation, and sharing, as cited by Brown and Smith (2002).

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses, effects or conditions not controlled by the researcher that might place restrictions on the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I found, the

results of this study limited by the school principal's firsthand experience, word of mouth, or educational knowledge about the role and responsibilities of the assistant school principal. I collected data from public school principals on the Island of Puerto Rico, which may not be generalized to other school principals in other U.S. states, territories or countries. As researcher, I based survey self-report responses on principal participants' willingness to complete the survey. Although participants represented one same self-governing territory, they were demographically diverse in gender, age, years of experience, and education. I conducted exploratory analysis using demographics from the on-line survey, which consisted of different categories of questions, such as Likert scale questions and open-ended questions. I reported findings from each question and how the demographic groups responded.

PR's principals serve schools of all sizes including: elementary, middle, and high schools from both urban and rural areas. Since urban and coastal areas were more populated than the rural and mountain areas, population as a factor could affect the way some school principals perceived the need for AP support. The demographic questions provided contextual information to examine gender, age, educational level and time in service. The potential existed for professional bias given that school principals were the only administrative leaders in the school and may have answered questions based on the many needs they had, and not on the needs of the entire school system. Another limitation, I developed the survey in English and translated it into Spanish for distribution to principal participants.

Delimitations

A delimitation occurred because the study involved all Puerto Rico school principals and I did not administer the survey in a controlled environment simultaneously taken with all participants. The survey served as the tool to discover the notions, perceived role and responsibilities of the assistant principal, although I could not ensure that all schools connected to the Internet at the time of the study. I conducted the study across the entire educational ecosystem involving more than 1,200 active school principals. As the researcher, I could not validate that all school principals accessed their work email regularly.

Definition of Key Terms

Assistant Principal - A school administrator that works closely with the school principal in all areas of managing a school. When the school principal is absent from the school premises, the assistant principal can assume a de-facto role as principal and would be responsible for the administration of the school until relieved by the school principal. Many schools have assistant principals that help school principals with several areas of a school's administration (Barnett, Shoho, and Okilwa, 2017).

Instructional Leadership (IL) - For the purpose of this research, the term IL is defined as those actions that a school principal takes, or delegates to others, to promote growth in student learning. In other words, the school leaders support educational achievement by making instructional quality the main priority of the school and brings that vision to realization (Searby et al., 2017).

Perception - The way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted. The notion or understanding that one might have about the assistant principal position in Puerto Rico.

School Principal (Puerto Rico School Director) - School principals manage the overall operation of schools. In addition, they set and oversee academic standards and ensure that teachers have the tools and resources, such as training, necessary to meet teaching and students achievement standards. School principals establish the school as a resource to students, families, and the school community. In addition, principals serve as the public face of their schools. They are also responsible for responding to the concerns of parents and members of the community (U. S. Department of Labor). The job duties of school principals in Puerto Rico vary by the size of the school and its location. In Puerto Rico, the school principal's job description is listed under Public Law #149 (1999), Section 2.13. Under the newly enacted 2018 law, the school principal's job responsibilities or expectations are listed on page 15 under the header "Delegation of Functions, Recruitment, Evaluation, Reporting and Transparency, having a very broad meaning.

Public Law #149 (1999 as amended) (Ley Orgánica del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico) - The Law that established the Department of Education and served as the backbone to all local public policy developed for the Puerto Rico's public educational system until 2018.

Public Law #85 or the 2018 Educational Reform - This law abolished Law #149 and was a programmatic political promise of the administration in power. The initial bill submitted by the Governors' desk was substantially changed by the Legislative

branch, but the three main pillars of the project survived: the charter schools, also known as “Escuela Pública Alianza”, the school vouchers, and the strengthening of the Educational Regions management and decision-making process (eight in total).

Summary and Organization of Study

The development of the assistant principal position for Puerto Rico’s educational ecosystem could alleviate the workload of the Island’s school principals. Schools in Puerto Rico are under pressure and school principals are expressing physical and emotional stress (Benítez-Canales, 2013). A distributed leadership practice (Spillane, 2006) approach to managing the school environment would support leadership goals nationally. At the time of the study, research showed schools in Puerto Rico in constant transition and change. As of 2018 a new law was enacted that “reforms” the current educational system (Ley Núm. 85 de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico de 2018).

In Chapter 2, the literature review examined the roles of the school principal, the assistant principal, and the school history and laws affecting the Puerto Rico public school system. The literature review provided a better understanding of how the assistant principal and principal positions stand or intersect, and how distributed leadership practice (Spillane, 2006) constitutes a practical leadership approach and a theoretical framework.

In Chapter 3, I described the descriptive statistics quantitative methodology used in the study along with the research questions, the research design, research instrument, deployment and management of the data collection and analysis process, and reliability.

In Chapter 4, I analyzed the results from the data collection and data analysis and compared them to the research questions to determine how they were answered.

In Chapter 5, I summarized the research study and included: the problem, purpose, research questions, methodology, research design, findings, discussion, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review explored Puerto Rico school principals perceptions on instituting an assistant principal position into the Puerto Rico public school system. The role of the school principal and the assistant school principal increased in complexity through the years (Addi-Raccah, 2015; Barnett et al., 2017; Houchens, Chunling, Zhang, Miller, & Norman, 2018). With the advent of changes in federal laws and local government requirements, responsibilities increased for both, the school principal and the assistant principal, partly due to changes from the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) from 2002, Race to the Top from 2009, and most recently the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) from 2015 (Klein, 2019).

After the Hispanic-Cuban-American War and subsequent invasion of the Island of Puerto Rico by US troops in 1898, the military government and Governors appointed by the President institutionalized the English language and the American educational structure on the Island. This historical event helped the creation of the Department of Education, supported by the 1900 Foraker Law, passed by Congress (Foraker Act of 1900). Many other studies and reforms took place through more than 122 years of political, cultural, and social relationship between the Nation and the Island. In more recent times, two major changes in State Law, Law #149 (Ley Núm. 149 - Orgánica del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico de 1999) and most recently Law #85 (Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico de 2018) passed and still the term used to identify the school leader is School Director. The correct translation in Spanish for the school principal title is school director or "*Director Escolar.*" However, the researcher uses the school principal title in this study when referring to the leader and manager of the school

(Ley Núm. 149 Ley Orgánica del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico de 1999, and Law #85, Ley Núm. 85 de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico de 2018.

Matthews and Crow (2003) stated, being proactive about learning for students means that the school principal cannot be the only source of leadership for learning; often ignored are the assistant principals who have a significant leadership role to play. In Puerto Rico, the assistant principal position was not transitioned into the PR public-school structure as the local system started to resemble the American educational school structure.

Literature Sources

I investigated research studies and information related to the position of the school principal and the assistant school principal. An effort was made to locate peer-reviewed studies, papers, dissertations, and articles that expounded on job descriptions, duties, roles, and responsibilities of the school principal and the assistant school principal. In addition, I reviewed scholarly literature to explore the development and expectations of assistant principals regarding their administrative, managerial, and leadership duties. I used the following key words to drive the research: Principalship, School Principal, School Director, Assistant Principal, Assistant School Director, Role, Role expectations of School Directors, Expectations, Role expectations of Assistant Principals, Perception, Role definition, and Leadership.

I used the following databases and consulted several academic libraries during the search of literature: ERIC, JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, ProQuest, Google Scholar, and Lexisnexis. Additionally, I used the George Washington University Gelman Library System to search for relevant topics and terms. Next, I researched the resulting

compilation of articles, studies, and books relative to my study. The results of the searches were peer-reviewed findings on assistant principal and school principal leadership, development, roles, and responsibilities. The searches also revealed how leadership practices, including distributed leadership practice (Spillane, 2006), affect the administrative and leadership experiences in schools.

Conceptual Theoretical Framework

Using a Distributed Leadership Practice (Spillane, 2006) theoretical framework, I examined the potential of adding an assistant principal position into Puerto Rico's public school system to share principal leadership responsibilities. Indeed, an important objective of theory is to offer a road map or model of why our surroundings are the way they are and how they can be improved (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Theory is a method to see the world in a simplified way, aimed at making a phenomenon clear and trying to explain some aspect of how it works. Theories form a basis about what is going on with the phenomenon, one that tells the story, giving new insights, and helping the researcher understand the phenomenon (Anafra and Mertz, 2006).

According to Spillane (2006), distributed leadership practice is more than shared leadership. It is counting everybody's actions, moving beyond the school principal and including other potential leaders in the process. In this process, it is the combined interactions among leaders, followers, and their situation that are vital (Spillane, 2006). The Dictionary of Organizational Behaviour Online defines Distributed Leadership as:

> An approach to understanding leadership that argues that leadership takes place throughout the organization and not just at senior levels or in formal leadership roles. It identifies activities of leadership such as, influencing the motivation or

practices of employees and argues that anyone who engages in these activities is a leader, regardless of the formal position. The role of acting as a leader is situation-dependent. For example, one may emerge as the leader for a specific project where one has the relevant expertise; however, relinquish this role once the project has concluded. Furthermore, followers (who in turn may engage in leadership activities or become leaders) influence the leader (Jeanes, 2019).

Distributed leadership is regarded as an "emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals" (Bennett et al., 2003, p. 7). It is exemplified by leadership activities endorsed within and by groups, rather than by individuals performing prescribed hierarchical roles, and encourages determined action by combination and interaction of the group's interests and capacities to produce outcomes beyond those that could be achieved by a leader alone (Davison et al., 2014). The distributed leadership theoretical framework explored how distributing principal leadership and sharing it with assistant principals works in schools.

Distributed Leadership Practice

Spillane (2006), used a distributed leadership practice framework. He defined three essential elements for distributed leadership; (1) leadership practice as the central and anchoring concern; (2) leadership created from the interactions of leaders, followers, and the situation at hand; (3) the situation ultimately defined through leadership practice. Distributed Leadership Practice theory suggests that leadership is no longer the sole responsibility of the school principal (Spillane, 2006). This view recognized that leading a school required several leaders, including and involving assistant principals and teachers.

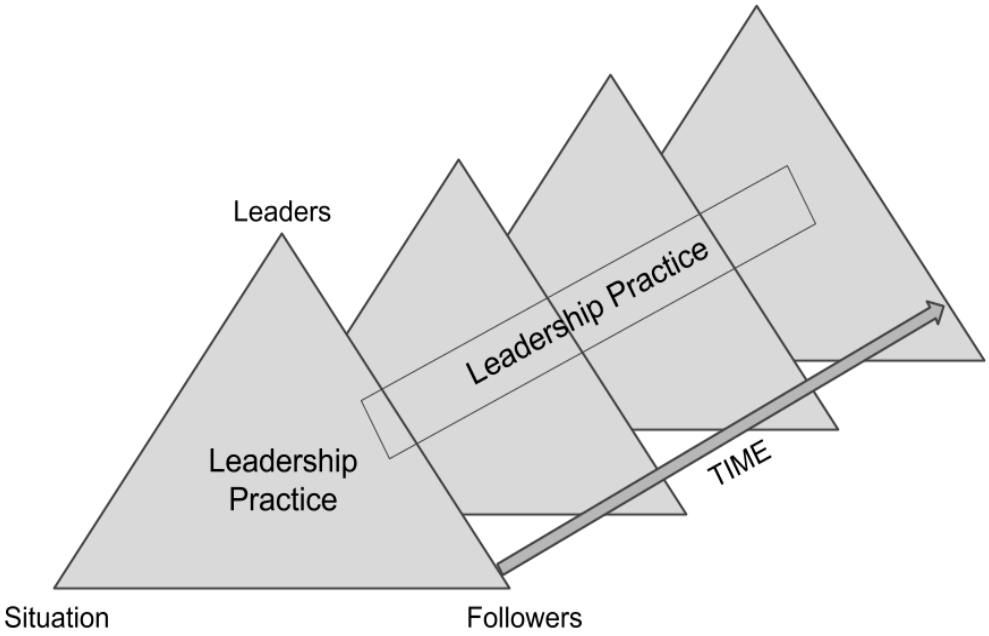

Figure 2. Leadership Practice from a Distributed Perspective (Spillane, 2006)

Harris (2008) stated that the education literature was well documented when supporting the use of distributed leadership, as this practice has the potential to help increase self-purpose and job skills for those taking on more leadership and decision-making opportunities. Hallinger and Heck (2009) stated that a constructive relationship existed between distributed leadership, organizational improvement, and student achievement.

Hallinger and Heck (2009) conducted a longitudinal study on the effects of distributed leadership affecting school improvement and growth in student math achievement. The study was conducted in 195 elementary schools in one state over a 4-year time span, using multilevel latent change analysis. The research uncovered substantial direct effects of distributed leadership on change in the schools' academic capacity and indirect effects on student growth rates in math. The research findings

supported two changes in the perspectives of educational researchers and policy makers. First, there was growing interest in how leadership was shared or "distributed" among administrators, teachers, and parents in schools. Second, there was interest in the role that leadership plays in generating school improvement over time. One could ask as a researcher how is the school principal exercising distributed leadership practice and how is the instructional leadership affected, as the administrative duties are overwhelming daily school principal's schedules (Benitez-Canales, 2013). In conclusion, the study supported a perspective on distributed leadership that supported building the academic capacity of schools as a means of improving student learning outcomes. Leadership at all levels of the system was the key if change was sought, especially among leaders focused on capacity building and developing other leaders who could carry on identifying distributed leadership as a potential contributor for change and school progress (Fullan, 2020).

Concepts from organizational leadership under Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership theory demonstrated a useful lens for framing this study. Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership theory sustained stories about greatness in school leadership, but frequently ignored that leadership was a team effort and could not be effectively done alone, but rather through a group of individuals, not necessarily at the top of the organization. Distributed leadership is about the interaction between people as leaders, followers, and their situation, including those with or without formal leadership positions (Spillane, 2005). Distributed leadership theory recognizes that keys to success include the way that leadership is facilitated, orchestrated, supported, and that many people have the potential to exercise leadership in any organization (Harris, 2008). For

this study, the research survey explored the school principal's perceptions on seeking help and on the delegation of potential AP duties in the following areas: help with administrative and instructional leadership duties, delegation of administrative and instructional leadership responsibilities, performance measures, parent and community relations, and teacher evaluations. Research indicated that when distributing leadership what was important was how the leadership was distributed (Bolden, 2011). Based on this organizational concept, formalizing the assistant principal position in Puerto Rico may be the most effective way of distributing principal leadership duties.

Distributed leadership is viewed as a growing property of a group of interacting individuals, (Bennett, Harvey, Wise & Woods, 2004). The leadership activities are characterized and enacted within and by the group, rather than by individuals performing prescribed roles. Additionally, distributed leadership supports concerted action using the power of combination and interaction of individual's interests to produce outcomes beyond those achieved individually (Bolden, 2008; Harris, 2008; Spillane, 2006). In this study exploring the PRDE system, the principal could conceivably share formal leadership and administrative responsibilities with an assistant principal, within a distributed leadership practice framework (Spillane, 2006). The distributed leadership model does not invalidate the importance of formal leadership, of providing inspiration, guidance, and instruction from the top, (Bolden,2011). One of the strengths of distributed leadership emphasized the potential for both, concentrated leadership, as well as distributed forms of leadership to be reciprocally supportive (Bolden, 2008). This form of leadership avoids portrayals of heroes and passive followers, and implies that boundaries of leadership are inclusive, not exclusive. This inclusive leadership, as a

conceptual approach, demonstrated how the assistant principal position could become a future channel for distributed leadership in the Puerto Rico public education system.

Distributed leadership has a flexible potential held by the group that enhances the capacities of individuals to take the lead aligning their capacity with specific challenges. This suggested that different individuals, at different points in time, and faced with challenges, were likely to lead the group depending on the specific challenge being faced and the context to be addressed (Bennett et al., 2004). This concept appeared as components in the administrative distribution of leadership. These and other associated studies helped apply the conceptual framework of distributed leadership.

Culture and Distributed Leadership

School personnel constructs of influential leaders are based on interactions with those leaders as well as conversations with other coworkers about those leaders. The school personnel based their construction on forms of human capital, cultural capital, social capital, and economic capital (Spillane, 2005). Puerto Rico's cultural nature towards school leadership could bring an array of predispositions if the AP position was added, such as the feeling of co-leadership since the AP position is not used currently in the Island's educational system. Spillane (2006) discussed a view of distributed leadership as the "*leader-plus aspect*" that begins with co-leadership or leadership partners embracing individuals who could be required to take a leadership role, whether formally recognized or not. In addition, Gronn (2002) provided three forms of leadership interactions: (a) spontaneous collaboration where leadership practice arises in response to a particular problem or requirement; (b) spontaneous working relations based on previous experiences of working close together and having a degree of trust for each other; and (c)

institutionalized practice with the learning process emerging where individual A is learning from B. Taking into consideration the *Puertorrican* gregarious culture, and that distributed leadership involves interactions, followers, and their situations, many individuals in the PR school system could potentially exercise leadership in the organization in different positions (Harris, 2008; Spillane, 2005). That same gregarious culture could trigger the production of common goals, unavailable if approached individually. Although, it is important to remember that Spillane (2005), stated that "distributed leadership in itself is not a recipe for effective leadership practice" (p. 103).

Culturally, teachers and school principals in the Puerto Rico school system are considered important people among others in the community because titles such as School Principal are entrusted with power, knowledge, managerial and people skills (Benitez-Canales, 2013). Understanding how leaders in the schools work together, as well as separately, to execute leadership functions and tasks is an important aspect of social distribution of leadership, considering the representation of distributed leadership including two or more leaders and followers (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004).

MacBeath et al., (2004) stated on cultural leadership distribution, leadership is naturally assumed by members of the group and shared organically between their members; it is intuitive, it is not given but rather assumed, it becomes organic, and it is embedded in the culture. Distributed leadership culturally sees the strength of the school as located in its collective intelligence and energy, or in other language this may be known as social capital (MacBeath, 2004). A key concept in distribution culturally includes agency and reciprocity. As agency transfers from individual control to collective activity, it requires reciprocity, said MacBeath (2005). Elmore (2004) called

this process internal accountability that exists in cultures with strong norms built on four types of reciprocal relationships: (1) respect, (2) listening to and valuing the views of others, (3) competence, including the capacity to produce desired results while working with others; and (4) personal integrity. These hallmarks of a normative culture provide the sense of agency, the willingness to take risks, and to both offer and accept leadership arising from a discerned reciprocity. It is in this context that we can begin to make sense of leadership across the school, not linked to any title or position but as exercised individually and in concert in a culture which authorizes and confirms a shared sense of agency (MacBeath, 2004).

Conceptual Map

My research investigated three primary factors described in a conceptual framework map (Maxwell, 2013). These three factors were: (1) The School Principal, Role and Responsibilities, (2) The School Assistant Principal Role and Responsibilities, and (3) The Puerto Rico School System's History and Evolution.

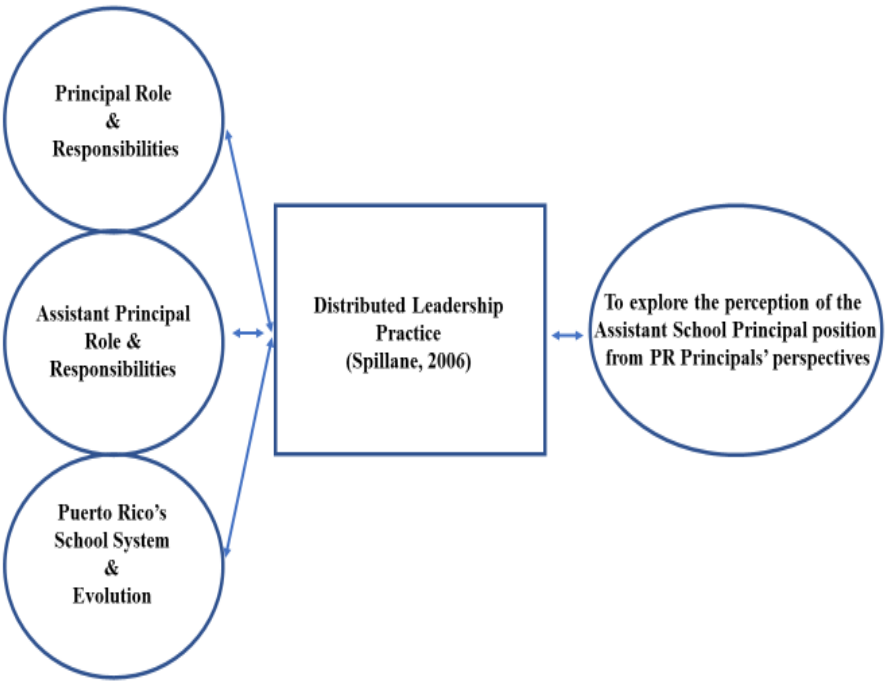

Figure 3. Conceptual map for the literature review research

The School Principal, Roles and Responsibilities

History of the School Principal

School principals play a major role in creating a cohesive team and must be team players. School principals are described as the catalysts for change in effective schools and are viewed by the community as key figures in the successful implementation of effective school strategies (Hallinger, 1992). Reports from the National Association of Elementary School Principals from 1998 suggested that because the pool of qualified candidates willing to assume positions as school leaders was growing smaller, filling vacant principalships was becoming problematic (Searby et al., 2017).

According to Hallinger (1992) three periods of change occureed in the USA for the principalship: (1) the 1960-1970s with school principals as program managers , (2) the 1980s for school principals serving as instructional leaders, and (3) the 1990s with school principals as transformational leaders. During the 1990s an array of strategies flourished that still impact the principalship. These include stringent standards, improved principal training, career support, leadership development strategies, and the planning for changes in leadership (Hallinger, 1992). The decentralization of authority during the 1990s, over both the curricula and the instructional decisions from the district office to the local school revealed an increased participation of teachers and parents in the decision making process resulted from these changes. The purview of these changes based their arguments on the premise that if teachers and school principals, respectively, were to teach and manage in a dynamic way, they needed the space and resources (Hallinger, 1992).

During the first period, from 1960 to 1970, Hallinger (1992) listed intermittent calls for principals to return to their roots as classroom teachers. However, for the most part, the national trend was towards the consolidation of schools, and the principalship profession's imitation of corporate management. School principals became responsible for managing federally sponsored programs designed to assist students with special needs. In the second period, the mid-1980s, a shift in professional norms occurred. During the 1980s period it was no longer acceptable for school principals to focus solely on school maintenance and program management, instead instructional leadership became the new educational standard for school principals (Hallinger, 1992). In contrast with a program manager, advocates of the instructional leader approach viewed principals as the primary source of knowledge for the development of the school's educational program. During the third period, the 1990s, the terminology "restructuring" suggested an attempt to reshape the school to better identify and meet locally determined needs, where teachers had enough independence to make the necessary instructional decisions (Hallinger, 1992). "In the late nineteenth century, educational reformers sought after a transformed school, strictly organized and centralized, having order and organization instead of a chaotic, corrupt, and inefficient school environment" (Glanz, 1991, p. 21). According to Glanz (1994), loosely structured and decentralized was boards controlled most of the nineteenth century schools. With time, communities became larger, student numbers increased, and after 1900, supervision of schools became the responsibility of the school principal. The principal took on more responsibilities and was relieved from teaching.

According to Darmody and Smyth (2016) "School principals are the vital factor in determining a school environment that favors and supports, both students and teachers (p.115)." The 2013 Wallace Foundation report summarized research since 2000 from detailed case studies and large-scale quantitative studies. The report established empirical connections between school leadership and improved student achievement, as reported in, *The School Principal as a Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning*. For years, the role of the school principal evolved, becoming exceedingly more complex and demanding (Fullan, 2007). In addition, as societies became more complex, schools played a much wider role in the community, responding to the diverse needs of students and their parents, stated Darmody and Smyth (2016). The study, conducted in Ireland, researched the simultaneous impact of individual and school factors on stress and job satisfaction of principals in Irish primary schools. The analysis was based on responses from principals from $N = 898$ schools. Darmody and Smyth (2016) stated that Ireland's principalship work was changing rapidly, and much of the changes were attributed to systemic factors in the field of education relating to legislation, school support, policies, and curricula. School principals managed multiple responsibilities and work under stressful conditions resulting in lower levels of job satisfaction, and the complexity of principal's tasks was compounded by the fact that education systems in several countries experienced substantial cuts in government spending adding additional strain to the job (Darmody and Smyth, 2013). A serious increase in responsibilities for the job of school principals resulted in more stress, resulting in a negative impact on their well-being (Chaplain, 2001).

Perhaps, the evolution of the school principal would encounter constant change in the future due to internal and external forces shaping the way the job is performed (Fullan, 2020). Considering past times and researching evidence-based literature, it becomes undeniable that the principal leadership role can be influenced by public policy changes, expectations from the community, and demands from teachers and students (Fowler, 2013; Fullan, 2020; Morgan, 2018). As the school principal's job evolves to accommodate current demands, school and the community should take seriously the knowledge, contributions, leadership experiences, and relationships that a well-rounded school principal brings to the local school ecosystem (Maxwell, 2019).

Role of the School Principal

According to Hallinger (1992), the predominant role of American principals, from the 1920s until the 1960s, was administrative manager. However, a series of changes such as a school restructuring imitating the profession of corporate management and the political nature of public educational institutions, led the majority of principals to foreswear the instructional arena as a domain of primary concern (Cuban, 1984; Tyack,1982, as cited in Hallinger, 1992).

Also, Hallinger (1992) found in the mid-1980s that the research on effective schools continued the tendency for administrators to be instructional leaders rather than merely managers of a school building. In addition, administrators seemed to play the roles of both school manager as well as instructional leader with an emphasis on school improvement, achievement, and accountability (Murphy, 1990, Wimpelberg, 1991; as cited by Hallinger, 1992).

According to Fullan (2020), principals must be driven to allocate time for what really matters, learn how to focus and prioritize, and become proactive rather than waiting for things to improve. As far back as 2000, the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) report entitled, *Leadership for Student Learning*: *Reinventing the Principalship,* suggested that the principal's first priority must be leadership for learning (Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko, 2000). The authors argued that the principalship, as it was viewed then, was a middle management position overloaded with responsibilities for basic building operations, fails to meet the fundamental priority. The job needed to be made doable by redistributing workloads among an administrative team, the appointment of an assistant principals, or several of them, to reduce the heavy demands on principal's time and to balance their work and personal time (Pounder and Merrill, 2001).

Grubb and Flessa (2006) suggested that the multiple strains on the school principal and the associated image of a strong principal carrying all the problems of managing the school come from conventional rational models of organizations, relying on a hierarchical division of labor with the school principal at the helm. After years of investment in helping improve leadership in schools, funding projects in over 28 states, and issuing over 70 research reports covering an array of leadership topics, The Wallace Foundation's Perspective Series (2013) was first published in 2012 and later expanded in 2013. After more than a decade of support to improve school leadership, funding diverse projects in over a half of all states, and responsible for over seventy research reports, the 2013 report predicted that school leaders perform the following five key practices well: "(1) shaping a vision of academic achievement for all students, (2) creating a climate welcoming to education, (3) fostering leadership in others, (4) improving instruction, and

(5) fostering school improvement by managing people, data, and processes" (p. 4). These five areas strongly supported scholarly work conducted by Leithwood et al. (2010) in the research study entitled, *Leadership: Investigating the Links to Improve Student Learning: Final Report of Research to the Wallace Foundation.*

As the role and responsibilities of the principalship constantly evolve due to rules and regulations or daily administrative chores in the office, one constant existed through the literature; the school principal shared time between two major responsibilities: (1) general administrative tasks, and (2) instructional leadership (Hutton, 2014; Maxwell, 2019; and Morgan, 2018). For both responsibilities a well thought out strategy or set of distributed responsibilities assigned to the assistant principal could help support the principalship (Searby et al., 2017).

Principal as Instructional Leader

Instructional leadership is a form of leadership designed to improve the quality of learning for student at schools starting with a vision, co-fostered and shared by the school, and supported with actions that stimulate teachers and staff to improve their practice on behalf of student learning (Markholt, Fink, & Michelson, 2018). Successful principals work hard to improve achievement by aiming at the quality of instruction was stated in The Wallace Foundation (2013) report entitled, *The School Principal as a Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning*. School principals help define and promote expectations; attack teacher seclusion and patchy efforts; and help connect directly with teachers and the classroom (Portin, Knapp et al., 2014). The principal's title derived from the term principal teacher (Hoerr, 2007), assumed that because of the title, the principal possessed more experience, knowledge, and skills than anyone in the school

and guided other teachers on instruction. In today's learning and administrative environment principals have neither the time nor the expertise to serve as instructional leaders in the traditional way. Hoerr (2007) suggested exercising this skill by facilitating teachers and perhaps the assistant principal.

According to du Plessis' (2013) research study findings, schools that support a culture of teaching, learning, and instructional leadership result in a positive learning community. School principals have many organizational responsibilities, from managerial issues to curricula and instruction. However, the school principal's main responsibility should be to create the best environment possible for learning by providing direction and support to both the teachers and the students (du Plessis, 2013). du Plessis conducted a qualitative interview-based research study of six secondary school principals (n = 6) in South Africa that had a 100% pass rate over five years. The title of du Plessis' research is *The principal as instructional leader: Guiding schools to improve instruction.* du Plessis' purpose was to clarify the role of the school principal as instructional leader and the areas self-identified for instructional improvement. The research design consisted of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, observations, and the examination of office documents. To ensure the trustworthiness and to minimize researcher bias the following strategies were followed: (1) Triangulation of methods, (2) Recorded data, (3) Verbatim transcriptions, (4) Field research, and (5) Low-inference descriptors.

> du Plessis' (2013) findings were categorized in eight themes: "(1) Principals' role in instructional leadership, (2) Building a positive learning community, (3) Establishing instructional order and discipline, (4) Expecting excellence in

curriculum, instruction and assessment, (5) Building a vision for continuously improving student achievement, (6) Developing content knowledge and facilitating Teacher Content Knowledge, (7) Using data to drive instruction, and (8) Principals playing an important role in instructional leadership. The study conducted by du Plessis (2013) concluded to have an effective school a strong directive principal, focused on curriculum and instruction, is essential" (p. 84).

This study investigated the feasibility of adding the assistant principal position into the PR school system using a distributed leadership practice theory (Spillane, 2006). du Plessis's findings characterized in eight themes listed above correlate to findings from this study using Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership practice theory. Using distributed leadership practice, a portion of the principal' administrative and instructional leadership responsibilities would be delegated to the assistant principal. The benefits of distributing leadership duties from the principal to the AP in PR could parallel the benefits expressed in du Plessis' (2013) eight themes.

Lunenburg and Lunenburg (2013) conducted a principal leadership research study. According to Lunenburg and Lunenburg (2013), in a scholarly research paper entitled, *Convergent of the School Principal: Leadership, Managerial, and Curriculum-Instructional* for the International Journal of Education, they concluded that principal management and leadership are important in addition to instructional leadership. Lunenburg and Lunenburg (2013) focused on three principal areas: (1) leadership role of the principal, (2) managerial role of the principal, and (3) curricula-instructional role of the principal. Empirical data to support their findings on what extent the principal should

be a manager, or a curricula-instructional leader was presented from a diverse group of scholarly authors and research studies.

Principals in North Carolina (n = 370) categorized their professional colleagues into one of five leadership roles (principal/teacher, scientific manager, instructional leader, curriculum leader, or general manager). Sixty percent of the high school principals chose general manager (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Brubaker & Simon, 1987; Sharp & Walter, 2012). Female principals and principals with more formal education (doctorate degree) preferred the role of curriculum or instructional leader compared with male principals and principals with less formal education (master's degree, sixth-year certificate), who preferred the role of general manager.

In a study of 149 successful elementary school principals in Massachusetts, more than 75 percent described themselves as "instructional leaders." The principals were selected on the basis of being strong leaders and their schools' high student achievement scores. The successful elementary principals in the aforementioned study and from other instructional leadership sources indicated that they devote most of their professional development time and resources to curriculum, instruction, and school improvement (Cooper, 1989; Johnson, 2008; Jones, 2012).

According to Lunenburg and Lunenburg (2013) on the principal's leadership role, "In recent decades the terms climate, ethos, and culture capture or describe the norms, values, behaviors, and rituals of the school organization, referred to as the personality of the organization"(p. 2). Theorists acknowledged the similarities organizations exhibit in terms of personalities and the importance that culture plays within. When looking at the principal's managerial role, stated Lunenburg and Lunenburg (2013), school administrators

play a central role in the following areas: (a) ensuring the alignment of with instructional goals, (b) supporting the professional growth of teachers, (c) including teachers in all information, (d) nurturing school relationships, and (e) managing the daily chores of a school. According to Lunenburg and Lunenburg's (2013), management is a prerequisite to leadership. In addition, Lunenburg and Lunenburg's (2013) research showed strong managerial skills as important as having strong instructional leadership for the school to succeed. An integral part of leadership is knowing what you do best using all of the available resources at your disposal. Sharing managerial and instructional leadership responsibilities with others retains and enhances the school principal's control and influence (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2013). Under the curriculum-instructional role, the school principal functions as the main leader, although scholars recognized disagreement on how much time and what roles and behaviors should be present between these two paramount areas of leadership. Regarding the principal as instructional leader, Lunenburg and Lunenburg (2013), referred to Joseph Murphy's (1990, 1998) six instructional roles as: (1) Promoting Quality Instruction, (2) Supervising and Evaluating Instruction, (3) Allocating and Protecting Instructional Time, (4) Coordinating the Curriculum, (5) Promoting Content Coverage, and (6) Monitoring Student Progress" (p.6). In conclusion, Lunenburg and Lunenburg (2013) stated, "research supports that effective schools have principals who exhibit strong curriculum-instructional leadership as well as essential management skills (p. 6).

The study conducted by du Plessis (2013) concluded that to have an effective school, a strong, directive principal focused on curriculum and instruction is essential. In the studies from du Plessis (2013) and Lunenburg and Lunenburg (2013), strong effective

principals focused on curriculum-instructional leadership were essential to effective schools.

Principals as Change Agents

In an educational ecosystem, said Cunningham (2014), the success or failure of a school can be explained by the type of leadership exercised, and how the administrators serve as change agents to improve the school's culture. Principals shape the school culture in positive ways when they share leadership with others and take responsibility for improving classrooms (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2001). Louis and Wahlstrom (2001) stated that the main job, and the most difficult, for any school leader is to shape the school's culture to focus on student learning. Cunningham (2014) stated that school leaders are expected to act as facilitators for change and leaders that work to improve the school culture boosting the school effectiveness by transforming the professional learning community (Sergiovanni, 2009). Although, their research found the one key factor affecting applications for the principal position was the volume of work associated with the position (Cunningham, 2014).

Therefore, based on the consistent comments of researchers (Bolden 2011; Harris, 2008; Spillane, 2006), the literature supported the position that leadership does not rest on one person's shoulders. Instead, leadership is a shared responsibility among all in the group. The implementation of a distributed leadership practice framework (Spillane, 2006) approach in schools could provide opportunities for job growth, empowerment, and resiliency, while shaping school culture and social capital to support and impact student learning.

As stated by Cunningham (2014), school principals build the school's human capital by working in collaboration with teachers and employees in an effort to implement distributed leadership practices. Accordingly, Viadero (2009), suggested that principals with strong education formation tend to attract and hire teachers with comparable qualifications, perhaps making the implementation of the distributed leadership practice more organic. In addition, school culture matters, and it was considered a critical element of effective leadership. Authors Louis and Wahlstrom (2001) suggested that organizations with strong leadership cultures tended to be more flexible, members of the group were motivated and committed, members were inclined to resolve conflicts, and members were prone to achieving goals. Viadero (2009) stated, parallel to teachers, principals may be the other important contributor to students' success in schools.

NASSP School Principal Availability/Findings

At the beginning of the 21st Century, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) identified trends affecting the number of school's principals available for the position. Some of the trends listed by the NASSP were: (1) increased uncertainty related to changes in public policy and accountability requirements, (2) low investment on training and professional development, (3) increased responsibility without incentives, and (4) lack of structured systems for recruitment of the best principal candidates. Factors listed by these trends included: an increase of retirement from experienced principals, high percentages of school principals moved to non-administrative positions, and a continued decrease in the number of qualified applicants for the school principal's

position. The National Association of Secondary School Principals presented these factors in a position statement entitled: *Principal Shortage*, adopted July 11, 2002, and revised on March 27, 2017 (NASSP, 2017).

The School Principal in Puerto Rico (PR)

PR school principal role. In Puerto Rico, Castillo and Piñero (2006) surveyed principals to study changes to the school principal's role, after the law provided more budget and administrative autonomy at the school and community levels. They conducted a survey study of principals in 2006 in Puerto Rico. From a total $N = 1{,}389$ school principals, the survey yielded 905 responses, resulting in a 65% response rate. After further review of the responses, 873 responses were completely answered and accepted for the study, representing a 63% response rate. The research asked the school principal's opinion on six different topics, including: school climate, administrative duties, instructional autonomy, academic backgrounds as school principals, service training, and the most important problems affecting their performance. The survey asked demographic questions on each area of interest with five questions using a Likert scale and one section using open-ended questions. The main findings followed: (1) principals understood that in order to implement a base management strategy they must have autonomy regarding administrative, fiscal, and teaching responsibilities, (2) under the school climate section, school principals understood there was a relationship between the students' socioeconomic level and their academic achievement, and (3) through the open-ended questions, the school principals indicated three main barriers hindering their role as school principals which were:

(a) excessive administrative work, for example, regular and last minute reports from the main office

(b) lack of administrative staff, for example schools without a secretary

(c) high teacher absenteeism, in PR no system exists for substitute teachers

After compiling all survey results from school principals in Puerto Rico, Castillo and Piñero (2006) recommended that the school principal can be viewed as a transformational leader. A transforming leader that capitalizes on the needs of the follower, such as an assistant principal (Burns, 1978, 2003) and has the fiscal and educational leadership freedom to implement changes. A transformational leader motivates, develops people around them, uses resources to maximize efforts, and pushes others upward, transforming them in the process (Burns, 2003). The survey results recommended that together with members of the school community, the school principal should make an in-depth analysis of the school's data available and develop an action plan to identify problems in the teaching area and in the staff's professional development.

PR Law #85 (2018), stated that the school principal reports directly to the Regional Superintendent and shall develop a modern, measurable, and rigorous school plan to be the starting point of their performance evaluation, including the school, teachers, and students. In addition, the school principal executes responsibility for the efficient administration of the allocated school budget and the periodic evaluations of the staff. The school principal establishes links with the community to encourage active participation in the school. Further, the new law stressed the importance of reforming the recruitment system for teachers and for principals so that the Puerto Rico Department of

Education (PRDE) could incorporate and retain the best professionals. Under the previous law, Article 4.04 from Law #149, from 1993, described 26 different functions and responsibilities for school principals. There were other requirements under the PRDE's Principalship Certification Department and other requirements established by the Secretary of Education that a candidate must complete before being considered for the principal position in Puerto Rico.

PR principal exodus factors. Benitez-Canales (2013) found several factors as igniters for the downturn of principals in Puerto Rico. First, overwork presented a factor because of the large number of administrative reports and meetings. Active and retired school principals stated that the amount of administrative work discouraged them and increased their emotional fatigue. After 2004, the exodus of principals was so extensive until the Puerto Rico Department of Education hired retired school principals to work four hours shifts in schools to fill principal vacancies as the recruitment process presented challenges at the beginning of each school year (El Vocero & Metro, 2017). A second exodus reason, according to Benitez-Canales (2013), was the intrinsic political environment within the educational department and the third reason was low wages paid to school principals. Additionally, this exodus happened after Hurricane Maria, in 2017, when teachers asked for a one year leave of absent without pay to move to the United States, either to work or live there after the impact of the natural disaster (Meléndez-García, 2017).

PR principal responsibilities and state laws. In terms of responsibilities, the state law #149, Article 2.13 (now repealed-Ley Núm. 149 Ley Orgánica del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico de 1999) stated the following about the school principal:

> "The Director (school principal) will be responsible to the Secretary and the School Board for the academic and administrative development of the school and will also be its representative to the community, and will seek and encourage the participation of teachers, parents, students and members of the community."

The enacted law, Law #85 (2018) (Ley Núm. 85 de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico de 2018), stated the following about the school principal:

> "The school principal's responsibilities are clearly delegated by the Secretary of Education in order to provide an education of excellence to our children. The school principal will respond directly to the Regional Superintendent, and must develop a modern, measurable and rigorous school plan that will be used to evaluate his or her performance, that of the school and of the students. An additional list of duties and responsibilities is found under Article 2.10, Law #85, from 2018 (Ley Núm. 85 de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico de 2018) with twenty-six additional administrative and educational responsibilities."

PR school principal challenges. Researcher, Benitez-Canales (2013) pointed out that the principalship presents unique challenges in Puerto Rico. Complaints from the school principal suggested that the school principal did not work as a transformational leader, but as a transactional leader. A transformational leader engages in supervising other team members in a mutual process to reach an increased level of morality and motivation, instead of serving as a transactional agent focusing on results and comfort under the current organizational system (Burns, 1978). The inconsistency and administrative improvisation of Puerto Rico's Department of Education (PRDE) and the lack of professional development for the school principal adversely affected the potential for the principal to serve as an instructional leader. In addition, "the large bureaucratic structure surrounding PRDE delays solutions to school problems" (Benitez-Canales, 2013, p. 94).

Benítez-Canales (2013) found that Puerto Rico school principals felt pressured by their responsibilities as instructional leaders, promoting change in their schools and in the community. Other administrative responsibilities of the principal included school discipline, personnel and student security, parent/community relationships, and personnel supervision among other important responsibilities (Finnigan & Daly, 2017). However, the principal is the leader responsible for all areas and responsibilities competing for attention, diminishing the time for pedagogy (Hoerr, 2007). These factors caused many school principals to consider early retirement from their position. In addition, the school principal may feel overwhelmed by his or her role as administrator and consequently, in many instances, relegates the instructional leadership role to a less important level (Reddekopp, 2008).

The Flamboyán Foundation study. A 2010 study by the Flamboyan Foundation, entitled, *Who is Leading Public Schools in Puerto Rico*? *A Profile of school principals*, included a report about the state of school principals throughout Puerto Rico. The Famboyán Foundation focused on improving educational related goals, including creating proven teacher curriculum, designing classroom libraries for students, providing professional development for teachers, and on building a strong non-profit sector. The total school principal population surveyed was $N = 1,411$. A total of 688 responses were completed representing a response rate of 49%. The study noted that a 34% response rate of all school principals, $N = 1,411$, served in that role for two years or less. The study was conducted during the 2007 - 2008 academic year and the qualitative research methodology included an extensive school principal survey; secondary data analyses using data from the PRDE; focus groups with active principals; and in-depth interviews

with PRDE top-level executives. Each one of these methods served to corroborate the information obtained for the report by the year-long study. Together, they offered a picture of school principals, their work and their needs, and the challenges faced by the PRDE as the entity responsible for primary and secondary education in Puerto Rico. In the study, 70% of the school principals were women, their average age was 50, and 55% worked in elementary schools. Additional findings included, that on average, school principals had worked in the public service for 22 years and had served as principals for an average of 8 years or fewer. The study found that 34% of the respondents indicated that politics and bureaucracy were the main reasons that pushed principals to leave their jobs, followed by the issues of not receiving adequate compensation (29%) and the extreme demands and responsibilities of the job (28%). The Flamboyán study revealed that the PRDE appeared to be more focused on a strategy of re-activating retirees to serve as principals on a part-time basis (4hrs. per day), instead of hiring the available applicants for the principalship.

The Flamboyán Foundation research study focused on the following areas: Demographics, Career Paths and Retirement Trends, Academic Preparation, Certification and Professional Development, Recruitment, Selection and Retention, Evaluation and Incentives, Responsibilities, Expectations and Regulations that define the position, Barriers, Challenges and Issues affecting principals' performance, Effects of the No Child Left Behind Law, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) amended and reauthorized in 2002.

PR school principal employment requirements. To apply for the principalship in Puerto Rico, an applicant must have: (a) 18 years or older, (2) U.S. Citizenship,

residence permit or alien work permit, (3) having completed a master's degree in Administration and Supervision or related pedagogy area, and (4) have experience as a certified teacher for a five-year period in public or private schools (Departamento de Educación, 2017). The complex process for recruiting and selecting school principals, as documented in official procedures listed on the administrative memo signed on August 24, 2017, required extensive coordination between school regions and the central administration, and appeared to be at least partly responsible for the recruitment problems.

According to the findings from the Flamboyan study, school principals stated that the certification process for the principalship did not guarantee that they would have the necessary skills to supervise a school under the previous law (Flamboyan Foundation, 2010). The research methodology included a survey, secondary data analysis, focus groups and in-depth interviews. From an $N = 1{,}411$ school principal population with a 688 survey response rate or 49% of the school principal population, principals completed the survey. The results from the Flamboyán Foundation study revealed that 39% of principals responded that the school principal's certification provided only minimum administrative skills. Nearly one out of four responses revealed that the theory they learned aligned with practice and that besides obtaining their necessary credentials, the learning experience was not of great use. The other 36% said that the certification did not guarantee the necessary skills and 25% believed they had what was needed to supervise the school. Further, the survey participants believed that mentorship from other school principals and their previous school job experiences were the primary factors that helped them succeed. Additionally, the Flamboyán Foundation indicated to better understand

what the district expects from them, school principals would like to be evaluated regularly. Although, before 2016 the law required that the Secretary of Education monitor and evaluate all principals, since there is no evidence school principals have formal evaluations on an annual basis.

PR principal evaluation system. In 2016, the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) established an evaluation system for the productivity of the school principals. The process was in the implementation phase and the application was scheduled for 2017. According to Hartley (2009), the principal should not be the only instructional leader in schools for school leader duties are too great for only one person to carry. In considering the addition of an assistant principal position in Puerto Rico, the literature suggested the assistant principal must be on the same page as the principal in all forms of leadership, since the assistant principal would be next in line to manage the school community (Morgan, 2018). Law #85 (2018) established a rigorous personnel performance evaluation process that resulted in the promotion, retention, tenure, recognition, and incentive for those who met or exceeded expectations, as well as in the consideration for appropriate corrective measures, including termination of employment when low performance persisted.

Assistant Principal, Roles and Responsibilities

In the early 1930s, with the disappearance of the special and general supervisor in the American school structure, there was a need for some sort of assistant principal responsible for school classes and administrative chores; thus, the assistant principal was born. The literature between 1940 and 1950, more precisely revealed the relationship

between the school principal and the general supervisor by using the title of assistant principal, Glanz (1994).

Assistant principals frequently perform as the school's operation manager (Hess, 1985) responsible for maintaining order, discipline, and stability (Himmler & Reed, 1985), and generally report to the school principal who determines their roles. Guzman and Hall (1984) stated that assistant principals have a myriad of opportunities to facilitate change in restructured schools, but their involvement was traditionally defined by the school principal. The conducted research outcome picture was mixed; there were some instances where the assistant principals took the lead unilaterally to facilitate change (Guzman & Hal,1984). In other cases, the school principal was active and able to form a close working team with the assistant principals. In the situation mentioned before, there appeared to be a facilitating team at work with all senior leaders in the building taking part and sharing responsibilities for leadership change. The researchers also found that assistant principals in active schools assigned to teachers' evaluations, had more time for interaction with all teachers. If school principals exhibited passivity in their assignment of change facilitating responsibilities, then assistant principals did not normally translate the "opportunity" into new initiatives, but instead used their positions to keep present rules and directives. When principals involved assistant principals in the change process, the team became dynamic, although having different roles, (Guzman & Hall, 1984).

Glanz (1994) stated that it would be a great undertaking by the school principal to take on all leadership responsibility because the nature of public schooling is too complex for one person to handle. Therefore, the assistant principal could provide extended support to the school principal. Howley, Andrianaivo, and Perry (2005) found school

districts having difficulty recruiting highly qualified new principals as a record numbers of school administrators reached retirement age. Hill and Banta (2008) found that as tougher standards were set, the list of demands from the state and federal government got longer nationwide for school leaders.

In today's challenging and changing school environment, the assistant school principal becomes an asset for the school principal, and the school structure, if there is synergy and coupling of strategic vision for change and improvement shared by both school leaders (Morgan, 2018). As stated by the literature, the assistant school principal position is considered the entry level step for the principal school leadership path. Therefore, school districts and professional preparation courses should pay close attention to the skills and practices provided to the assistant principal career path (Hutton, 2014). Also, school principals should be mindful that the assistant principal one day could be at the helm of the school, perhaps emulating practices learned from the previous experiences as assistant principals, and more importantly, from lessons learned from the school principal (Barnett, Shoho, and Okilwa, 2017).

Assistant Principal Role

Glanz (1994) wrote about the redevelopment of the assistant principal position and cited the then National Association of Secondary School Principals' (NASSP) Executive Director, Timothy J. Dyer saying:

> "There was a time, in the not-too-distant past, when the assistant principal was not accorded much attention in the literature or on the job. Very little was said about the AP's job in university training programs, and almost nothing was said about it in professional books or journals. The AP was simply regarded as someone

employed, if the school's enrollment justified it to take some of the burden off the principal. (NASSP, 1991, p. vii)."

The formalization of the assistant principal's position reemerged in the 1950 literature, as cited by Mertz (2006). Institutions like The Educational Research Services in 1998, to Winter and Morgenthal (2002), considered it important to look closely at the position of the assistant principal. As schools faced demands to improve student performance, the role of the assistant principal was critical in improving schools. However, this job was more complex, as the assistant principal strives to be an integral part of the transformation of the schools (Barnett et al., 2012; Normore, 2003). Research revealed a need for a new generation of principals to influence schools' outcomes and to provide instructional leadership on how to continue nurturing new leaders. As such, assistant principals would create a training field of future principals (Barnett et al., 2012). Furthermore, assistant principals are a resourceful support for school principals (Oliver, 2005). In 2013, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics anticipated the number of available jobs in school administration would grow from 10% to 20% until 2015, with over 23,000 available positions during this period.

The complexities and demands of school leaders and the principal and the assistant school principal are likely to increase as the reconfiguration of schools continue (Cranston, 2007). Research conducted in Australia, between 2005-2006, was able to draw on data from the Aspiring Principals Questionnaire (APQ) administered to deputy principals in state primary and secondary schools in Queensland. The APQ is taken by school leaders that possibly transition into the principalship with or without that intention. The total population of targeted schools (*N*) was 800. A total rate of 146

completed APQs were returned or 18% of the questionnaires. From the APQs returned, 102 or 70% of the responses came from urban locations and 44 responses or 30% came from rural locations. Three-quarters of the responses revealed that the variety and diversity of principals' work had increased in recent years, and less than one in five felt it had stayed about the same (Cranston, 2007). The research uncovered four main factors playing as potential incentives for those participants seeking the principalship: (1) capacity to achieve work/life balance; (2) school location acceptable to family; (2) good work conditions; and (3) good remuneration. On the other hand, two reasons surfaced as potential barriers when evaluating the move to the principalship: (1) the ease of managing a work/life balance from the deputy school principal position (the extra salary was not worth the increased responsibilities); (2) a deputy role allowed for closer contact with teaching and learning providing a higher personal degree of satisfaction. In conclusion, Cranston found that assistant school principals (or deputies) prefer a balance among the potential incentives and the barriers listed in the survey research before considering a move upward into the principalship (Cranston, 2007). Further, educational, professional and administrative barriers should be identified, with a direct focus placed at the school leaders' working conditions and how leaders relate to each other and their school cultures to make breakthrough changes (Fullan, 2003).

The school administration's job outlook, from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2018, projected eight percent growth between 2016 and 2026, about as fast as the average for all occupations, considering that student enrollment and the number of educational institutions available affected employment growth. The growth in the employment of school principals also depended on state and local budgets, as well as on

population growth. Local budget constraints could delay the building or the opening of new schools and the mobility of school principals. In addition, some school districts could elect to consolidate and close some schools within their districts, thereby limiting employment growth. However, if a budget surplus exists, school districts could open more schools, which could lead to a growth in employment. Finally, as the large baby-boomer generation retires, there may be opportunities for younger candidates to become principals.

School principals have the responsibility to nurture potential new school leaders. Teachers constitute the largest group of potential leaders and are a resource for promoting the effectiveness of schools (Weller & Weller, 2001). Principals could take the initiative to promote assistant principals by identifying potential leaders for the position and then provide them with opportunities to gain leadership experience. A person must have a clear understanding as to what leadership is, or how it is defined by job standards to become a leader (Covey, 2004). Using the leadership understanding, assistant principals must be ready to meet school challenges and bring out the innate worth of the people they lead. Covey (2004) also argued that foundational leadership work, experiences, and education should complement future endeavors as a school principal. According to Fink and Hargreaves (2003), sustainable leadership endures any individual; leadership is preserved when leaders leave, it never jeopardizes the development of others and requires investments in building long lasting capacities for improvement.

Assistant Principal Administrative Support

The National Association of Secondary School Principals stated that assistant principals have full or shared responsibility with the school principal for student

discipline, student attendance, administration of school policies, special arrangements at the beginning and end of the school year, and, in some cases, the evaluation of teachers. The literature reinforced the traditional custodial role of the assistant principal as a disciplinarian, and as a conflict manager (Koru, 1993). One of the earliest occurrences of the assistant principal dated back to the mid-1800 in Boston, where the local school board decided that a grammar and writing master was to be in charge when the headmaster was away. In 1867, John Philbrick, the Boston Superintendent, decided that every head assistant should be capable of handling the headmaster's work during his absences (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1970).

During the beginning of the 20th century, as the number of enrolled students increased, so did the appointment of assistant principals as supervisors, without a clear definition of the assistant principal's role. Potentially, these experiences helped produce the assistant principal role between 1940 and 1950. A trend of secondary schools at the turn of the 20th century assigned assistant principal positions, born of the necessity to manage progressively larger enrollments in merged schools (Barnett et al., 2012).

Weller and Weller (2002) conducted a roles and responsibilities survey among 100 assistant principals from urban, rural, and suburban schools who accepted the position recognizing they had a general knowledge of leadership theory and a baseline understanding of effective leadership. The survey executed by Weller and Weller (2002) found that 77% of the respondents identified that the primary responsibilities for assistant principals continue to be discipline and the accounting of attendance. A smaller subpopulation group or 13% indicated that improving instruction represented a main responsibility. Additionally, the study found that schools with more than one assistant

principal, generally had one AP oversee curricula and instruction, while the other AP was responsible for discipline and attendance (Weller & Weller, 2002).

Assistant Principal as Instructional Leader

The degree of commitment the principal had to instructional leadership and the degree of authority the principal delegated to the assistant principal influenced the perception of the effectiveness of the assistant principal. Weller and Weller (2002) stated that the more likely the principal was to practice a democratic form of leadership style that focused on academics, the more effective that principal would be as an instructional leader. Hartley (2009) stated that the challenge for a novice assistant principal was a way to meet the instructional needs of the school ecosystem while performing all other managerial duties. For assistant principals immersed in management tasks, Hartley (2009) commented that managerial tasks should be invigorating, refreshing, and stimulating, since assistant principals can move from daily routine tasks to a more fluid experience of instruction. Job descriptions may be ambiguous, and the responsibilities of an assistant principal could vary between districts and the school (Barnett et al., 2012).

In this study, faculty members of an educational leadership program, situated in a large urban university in the southeastern region of the United States, utilized focus group research to determine the perceptions of K-12 assistant principals regarding the effectiveness of an educational leadership program, and to provide program improvement recommendations to program leaders to increase job preparedness for emerging school leaders. From the literature, the key roles of the assistant principal support the principal in administrative, management, and instructional leadership duties and responsibilities (Barnett et al., 2012; Normore, 2003; Oliver, 2005).

Assistant Principal Position in Puerto Rico

The assistant principal position does not exist in the school structure of the Puerto Rico public education system. Although, the assistant principal position was inconspicuously included in the law (Ley Núm. 149 - Orgánica del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico de 1999) under Section 2.17. This section, Section 2.17, allowed the school principal to designate an assistant principal (sub-Director in Spanish), with the consent of the local School Board (Consejo Escolar) and the Secretary of Education's approval. The public school assistant principal position's description and responsibilities in the law evolved around supporting administrative chores. The assistant principal was to be selected among the school's teachers, under a special appointment, and could serve as the school principal if the principal was absent or unable to serve as the principal for any reasons. The new enacted law, Law #85, form 2018, was silent about the assistant principal position.

The Puerto Rico School System's History and Evolution

During centuries of Spanish rule, education was not a government's responsibility. Knowledge was taught in Puerto Rico as in Europe, throughout religious or private schools, or affluent families provided tutors to their children. It was not until 1865 when a Public Education System was organized in the country by a Spanish governor's decree. The decree ordered a structured education program, established the requirements to exercise the teaching job, and assigned local municipalities the obligation to support schools.

The established public schools usually operated from the teacher's home and gathered fifteen to thirty children of the same sex. The teacher's pedagogy was

considered rudimentary because of the limited teacher preparation programs or education. The decree ordered compulsory education for all children six to nine years old. The lack of teachers and schools, the existence of a dispersed and isolated farmland, the reluctance to establish schools for girls, and the weakness of an insular treasury with 60% of its treasury committed to the military and ecclesiastical budget resources did not allow for significant progress towards universal education as stated in the governor's order at the time.

In 1897, the Commissioner of Public Instruction position was created by Section No. 45 of the Autonomic Charter, allowed by the Spanish government. At the end of the Spanish government and the Hispanic American War of 1898, there were 380 elementary schools on the Island for men, 138 for women, and 26 secondary schools and adult school. The total number of 544 schools housed a school population of 47,861 students. The change of sovereignty from Spanish rule to the United State of America surprised Puerto Rico's inhabitants. The new ruler found 86% of school children and almost 90% percent of the population illiterate at that time.

The Foraker Act of 1900

The Foraker Act of 1900, enacted by the Government of the United States, created among other departments, the Department of Education and the position of Commissioner of Education. The Foraker Act authorized the President of the United States to name the Commissioner, with the consent of the Senate, for a period of four years. It also established that the Commissioner would administer the public education system throughout the Island, approve the budget and disbursements, as well as report back on these aspects. The initial team consisted of a Commissioner, an accountant, a

secretary, two stenographers, a clerk in charge of offices, a messenger and a cleaning person.

On January 31, 1901, the Compiled School Law (*Ley Escolar Compilada*) was approved. This law established that the Commissioner (School Commissioner) oversee education, appoint supervisors and superintendents, prepare and put into effect courses of study, lead tests, prepare and issue licenses or certificates to teachers, select and buy all books, supplies and equipment necessary, approve plans for buildings to be used as schools, solicit and compile statistics and reports of municipal school boards and supervisors, superintendents and teachers, and formulate rules and regulations necessary for the proper functioning of the school system.

The University of Puerto Rico was created in 1901. Techniques were focused on how to memorize answers to questions prescribed for the student in order to complete the courses. Memorization was achieved by repeating aloud and in unison.

The Jones Act of 1917

The Jones Act of 1917 (Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act of 1917), provided that the Educational Commissioner prepare courses of study, subject to the approval of the Governor; also, prepare regulations for the selection of teachers and approve appointments for the educational system. The organization of the Department of Education evolved as the system grew, the functions expanded, and staff increased. In 1920, the Puerto Rico Department of Education consisted of a Commissioner, a Deputy, and three divisions: (a) Property and Accounts, (b) School Municipal Affairs, and (c) Documents. Each division had a manager who reported directly to the Commissioner.

From 1931, the services offered at the central level represented two general classifications: administrative and teachers, each headed by a Deputy Commissioner. In 1945, the administrative team included Property and Procurement, School and Municipal Affairs, and Personnel. The teaching team consisted of Supervision, Extension and Adult Services, Statistics and Research.

In 1949, the Commissioner of Education was first appointed by the Governor of Puerto Rico, with the advice and consent of the US Senate. However, this change did not affect the functions of this position. In addition, PR created the Division of Community Education. By this time the organization at the central level consisted of a Commissioner, two deputy commissioners (one in charge of teachers and the other for administration) and an Administrative Officer, in charge of personnel affairs and planning. In addition, several other divisions emerged such as: Vocational Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Finance, Personnel, School and Planning, Research, Statistics, Community Education, School Lunch and a Technical Division (Fajardo, 1999).

The Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1950, reorganizing the Executive Branch, affected the organization at the central level. Through the plan, the following entities were transferred to the Department of Education; Corporation of Industries for the Blind, the Vocational Institute of Adult Blind, the School of Industrial Arts of the University of Puerto Rico, Child Day Care Centers, the Photographic Laboratory, the Schools of Music and Public Libraries. Earlier that year, the Printing Department was established administratively to intensify production of teaching materials.

The Constitution of Puerto Rico, and Self-Government

In 1952, with the acceptance of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Consitución del Estado Libre Asociado de PR, 1952) by the US Congress, the term Commissioner was changed to the Secretary of the Department of Education. Under the new Constitution, the right to free education was established in elementary school, "as far as the resources of the State permit" (Constitution del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, Sec. 5, 1952).

Sapientis, a nonprofit entity that worked directly in Puerto Rico until 2014, to enhance educational opportunities in Puerto Rico, found that Puerto Rico was at that time the third largest school district in the United States. In 2011, Sapientis found that the educational system in Puerto Rico was serving approximately 560,000 students under the general school program; it had 1,523 schools throughout 78 municipalities, 42,000 teachers; the special education program served 99,680 students, and the adult program served another 32,000 students.

2018 Educational Reform in Puerto Rico

Relative to the future implications of this study, on March 29, 2018, a new educational reform law was adopted by the government. Law #85 from 2018, also known as *Ley Núm. 85 de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico de 2018*, a Bill presented by the State House of Representatives, voided the former law, Law #149 form 1999 (Ley Núm. 149 - Orgánica del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico de 1999), that withstood political turmoil, and was considered progressive in nature because the power for budget and overall school management was centered in the school itself in conjunction with the community.

The political proposal, now translated into new public policy, rested on three main pillars: the creation of Public Alliance Schools (Charter Schools), the creation of the Regional Educational Offices, and the implementation of Public Educational Vouchers. Additionally, the new law proposes the establishment of a budget based on the average cost per student to ensure that each student receives the same investment of resources for their education.

The establishment of the Charter Schools, now known as the Public Alliance Schools proposal, centered around giving students greater access to academic offerings through specialized nonprofit entities to strengthen the curriculum, teaching, and to allow communities including fathers and mothers to have a more active role in the education of their children. The establishment of the Regional Educational Office pretended to decentralize services from the main office in San Juan (the Capital City), having a more efficient structure that responded directly to the needs of the school community, reducing costs and eliminating redundancy; establishing an effective evaluation and accountability systems; establishing a policy of digital transparency in educational processes; delegating greater powers and responsibilities to the Regional Superintendents and School Principals to address academic and administrative matters. The last pillar related to the establishment of the Free School Selection Program. As an additional advantage, to promote equal access to quality education for the most vulnerable sectors of our society, which promotes direct subsidy to parents through educational grants or educational vouchers.

As of 2020, the largest palpable impacts covered by the news are the closing of hundreds of schools across the Island and a drop in student's registration from 452,740 at

the end of the 2012 school year to 307,282 at the end of 2019. Since 2019, and after the new educational reform was signed, only one Public Alliance School (Charter school) was in place under the new Public Alliance Schools structure. The educational voucher process was unveiled in August 2019 as a pilot program. The voucher's application form was placed online and made available on an experimental basis. The students allowed to participate in 2019 was set at a maximum of 1% of the total student population, or approximately 3,000 students. The voucher program was limited to one modality: public school students who wanted to move to a private school that met the criteria of eligibility. The program was equitable between educational regions and the voucher program was projected to gradually expand until it reached 3% of the student population.

Puerto Rico School Performance

The Dialogo newspaper reported performance data on September 12, 2012, based on information from the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) for school year 2004-2005, PRDE had 598 underperforming schools, which was 40% of all the schools for that year. During 2005- 2006, the system reported 834 underperforming schools; in 2006-2007 there was a small reduction or 725 underperforming schools (-109 from previous year). Then the number of underperforming schools increased to 748 in 2007-2008 (+23 from previous year). In 2008-2009, the system registered 730 underperforming schools (-18 from previous year). In 2009-2010, the number increased to 942 schools (+212 from previous year).

There was another increase of underperforming schools for year 2010-2011 with 1,256 schools or 84% of the total school on the Island (+314). In 2011-2012 the system added another 6 underperforming schools for a total of 1,262. Finally, in 2012-2013 the

PRDE stated on their webpage that a total of 1,322 out of 1,451 or 91% schools were under improvement plans due to the failure of achieving meet the minimum standards stipulated by the federal law No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) for at least two consecutive years, as reported in the University of Puerto Rico's Dialogo Online newspaper issued on September 12, 2012. However, many schools are still underperforming each year.

The latest progress reports from the Puerto Rico's Department of Education, fiscal year 2018-2019, annual progress test known as the Measurement and Evaluation for Academic Transformation Test (Pruebas para la **M**edición y **E**valuación para la **T**ransformación **A**cadémica-META-PR) has downward percentages for all tested areas when compared with the 2017-2018 test year; Spanish is -0.8%, Math is -2.5%, English is -2.1%, and Science is -2.8%. The results showcase that students are underperforming in all areas as presented by the Puerto Rico Department of Education (2019).

Summary

The principal and the assistant principal roles both have long histories in the United States of America. However, for some reason, either political, social, or economic, the assistant principal position did not transition into Puerto Rico Department of Education's school leadership structure and the public education sector. Although, it is known that some private schools and the Department of Defense education system on the Island have an assistant principal or a vice-principal position. The literature review provided information about the AP position's development, expectations, and the Federal Government's tracking information via the Department of Labor; therefore, creating an

outlook for potential candidates based on a projected growth rate of 8% from 2016 to 2026 (Department of Labor, Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

The literature review articles and studies supported findings that school principals in Puerto Rico (PR) felt pressured by varying and extensive responsibilities of the principalship as an administrator and instructional leader, promoter of change for the school, and advocate of the school community's hopes for a better school. Regarding the principalship in Puerto Rico, Benítez-Canales (2009) stated, "when expectations for success are placed on the principalship's shoulders, that responsibility must accompany resources, infrastructure, supplies, budget, and personnel to make that possible" (p. 1). This researcher further stated that the school principal in Puerto Rico serves as a traditional administrator, working within the boundaries of a classical administrative vision (Benítez-Canales, 2009). These same factors may have been at the forefront of many PR school principals thinking when they considered early retirement. The school principals were overwhelmed by their role as school administrator. Consequently, the instructional leadership role, in many instances, was relegated to a less important priority, according to the Flamboyán Foundation in Puerto Rico.

The new Educational Reform Law (Law #85, 2018) with no clear description or list of expectations increased the level of uncertainty for current and new school principals in Puerto Rico. One potential way to fix the problem of a lack of clarity under the new law was to reinvent the role of the school administrator to make the job doable and for the PRDE to consider codifying the assistant principal position.

The research study captured the perceptions of school principals in Puerto Rico regarding the potential roles and responsibilities of assistant principals. For the study, I

administered an electronic survey via email and sent surveys to all active school principals at local schools on the Island. The survey captured demographic data, data from a series of Likert scale questions, yes-no questions, and open-ended questions. Participation in the study did not require prior knowledge or experience from school principals about assistant principal roles and responsibilities. Since the assistant principal position was not instituted in Puerto Rico public schools, the study's findings could provide meaningful data for adding this position, relative to future school leadership, administrative and instructional leadership, and school policy decisions.

The distributed leadership practice (Spillane, 2006) theory focused on what people do, and how and why they do it. In this study, I explored how principal managerial duties in Puerto Rico could be distributed to an assistant principal, how instructional leadership could be effectively conducted by school principals and assistant principals, and how using distributed leadership between school principals and assistant principals could create a more effective school leadership environment in Puerto Rico's schools. The distributed leadership practice (Spillane, 2006) theoretical framework proved to be a relevant lens for exploring the distribution or delegation of principal leadership responsibilities to an assistant principal to create a principal leadership team and improve principal effectiveness in Puerto Rico. Under Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership practice model (which involves the interaction of leadership situations, followers, and leaders) assigning the role of the assistant principal reflects the distributed leadership theory in practice.

Chapter 3: Methods

This study explored the predictability and feasibility of adding the assistant principal (AP) role into Puerto Rico's public school system. Using an on-line research survey instrument, Puerto Rico's school principals voiced their perceptions, knowledge, and understanding of the AP role and predispositions on leading a school with the support of an assistant principal (Glanz, 1994; Morgan, 2018). At the time of this study, the Puerto Rico Educational Reform Law omitted the assistant principal position, keeping all managerial and instructional leadership responsibilities on the shoulders of the school principal (Law #85, from 2018).

I investigated the initial groundwork for this research in Spanish during a 2016 visit to the Manatí School District. There, I conducted interviews with three different school principals, making simultaneous translations from English to Spanish to English to collect information and exchange data. That prompted the idea to conduct a full online survey, in 2017, to capture the perception and degree of knowledge that current school principals had about the AP position. I created the initial research instrument in English and subsequently translated it into Spanish for deployment to all current working school principals during the study. Later, I translated the survey back to English for the purpose of presenting the results.

In this study, I used the term principal, to refer to the PR building principal. In Puerto Rico, the building principal carries the title, School Director. However, using the term principal allowed me as the researcher to remain consistent with the existing scholarly body of knowledge and research on assistant principals and principals.

Epistemology

For this study, I used social constructivism. Social constructivism (Jean Piaget, 1896-1980) emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in a society and how constructed knowledge rest on this understanding (Derry, 1999; McMahon 1997). Vygotsky (1980) stated in a social constructivism learning environment, effective learning occurs through interactive processes of discussion, negotiation, and sharing, as cited by Brown and Smith (2002). Hence, social constructivism guiding principles develope as knowledge is constructed throughout human activity and individuals create meaning through their interactions (Vygotsky, 1980). This study provided a voice to PR principals as they explored the possible roles and responsibilities to be delegated or distributed to an assistant principal, and what those responsibilities would look like, based on socially and professionally constructed meanings. The principals' perceptions of the assistant principal position for Puerto Rico's schools varied in definitions depending on the background, experiences and education of each principal. As researcher, I socially constructed meaning from the data findings, literary research, and different levels of knowledge about the assistant principal position, and what a model ~~the~~ assistant principal position could look like in PR (Cohen and Schechter, 2019).

Methodology

As researcher, I chose a quantitative methodology and a 24-question web-based survey instrument with various styles of questions, including several open-ended questions. Creswell (2012) stated that quantitative research is a way of testing objective theories by exploring the relationship between variables. These variables can be

measured, usually on instruments, so that numbered data can be used for statistical procedures to test well-specified hypotheses concerning the predetermined variables that generate numbers relevant for statistical analysis (Creswell, 2012).

I used established research practices in this study. Research is defined as the methodical investigation into a study of a subject or subjects, in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions; it aims at finding answers to questions by applying scientific procedures (Creswell, 2012). Research refers to a search for knowledge; also, it is a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic (Kothari, 2004).

Research Design and Data Collection/Analysis

In the research design, I used descriptive statistics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to analyze the perceptions, understanding, and knowledge school principals held about the AP position. For data collection, I sent the survey to all serving school principals electronically using SurveMonkey. Data analysis included, standard deviation, variance, and other measures of central tendency such as, mean, mode, and median. I used Chi-square results to analyze associations between categorical variables . The Chi-square statistic is a single number that provides information about how much variation exists among categorical variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The correlation coefficient can take on values from -1.00 to +1.00, inclusive. Zero indicates no relationship (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Correlations can also be used for prediction with a predictor variable and a criterion variable. Prediction is the estimation of one variable from a knowledge of another (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Validity was enhanced as I cross-

referenced responses to questions presented in different formats to the principal population (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

For data collection, I used and online survey. I emailed the online survey to all active school principals, $N = 1{,}292$, listed on the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) website directory. The 24 question survey had 486 school principal responses or a 37.6% response rate. I collected data for an eight day work week period in April of the 2017 Spring semester. I sent the first email to participants accompanied by a full description of the intended research, definitions, and deadlines. On day three and five, I sent a reminder email with a thank you note to those who completed the survey. On day eight, I sent another reminder email stressing the deadline date. Initially, I constructed the survey in Spanish and afterwards translated it into English. This process allowed me to use the Spanish language to explain the survey questions to participants and convey the intended purpose of research.

The online survey had the following categories:

- Questions 1 through 8 represented school principal demographic and personal data.
- Questions 9 through 10 asked for principals' number of students and numbers of teachers.
- Questions 11 through 14 reviewed school principal working hours and responsibilities in administrative, managerial, and instructional leadership.
- Questions 15 through 18 explored principal's knowledge of the assistant principal (AP) using Likert scaled questions with the range: *Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither, Disagree. and Strongly Disagree*.

- Question 19 through 24 asked open-ended questions on school principal knowledge, perceptions, and understanding of the AP position. I used a coding system (apriori) for the open ended survey questions. See Appendix A for English or Appendix B for Spanish.

In the data collection, I excluded using other school divisions or personnel from the PRDE or the local school district. I used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to run survey data to perform data analysis. SPSS statistical software facilitates solving business and research problems through ad hoc analysis, hypothesis testing, geospatial analysis, and predictive analytics. SPSS is used to understand data, analyze trends, forecast and plan to validate assumptions, and drive accurate conclusions (IBM, 2020).

Research Questions

I investigated the following two primary research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of serving principals in Puerto Rico regarding the potential role and responsibilities of an assistant principal?
2. What is the degree of understanding and knowledge of serving principals in Puerto Rico regarding the roles and responsibilities of an assistant principal?

I added two subquestions to investigate how serving school principals view delegation of duties and job qualifications of assistant principals.

A. Which areas of work will the school principal in Puerto Rico most likely delegate to an assistant principal?
B. What educational requirements, experience, and time in service, will the school principal in Puerto Rico desire to fill an assistant principal position?

The answers to these questions could provide a framework for implementing potential policy changes, new organizational structures, and support for the school principal within the Puerto Rico public education system.

Data Instrumentation, Participants, and Sites

To examine principal perceptions, created or not, within this study population, I deployed a web-based survey on April 2017 to PR school principals, serving in part-time or full time positions. I obtained approval to conduct the research from the PRDE. The initial email included information about the online survey, a request for informed consent, and a link to the secure survey website under www.surveymonkey.com. Once participants clicked on the link, they were able to complete the web-based survey online. Additionally, a communication from the local School Directors Association-ONDE (*Organización Nacional de Directores Escolares*) went out supporting the survey and encouraging members to actively participate. I collected data results via the online *SurveMonkey* tool.

I supported my data collection decision to use a web-based survey, sent via email, by the following reasons: (1) economy of the design, (2) faster turnaround, and the benefit of finding qualities from a population from a smaller dataset (Babbie, 1990; Fowler, 2002, as cited by Creswell, 2012). It proved easier to disseminate a survey via email to a unified large administrative structure, such as the Puerto Rico's Department of Education. Another strong reason was that the survey permitted a faster turnaround in data collection versus other instruments like observations, interviews or a combination of methods in diverse geographical area with over 1,292 schools at the time. The survey

was presented and approved by the Puerto Rico's Department of Education's (PRDE) IRB, as well as The George Washington University's IRB.

After consideration of the benefits and limitations of using web-based surveys, I determined that enough controls were in place to avoid potential difficulties using a web-based survey format. I selected a popular web-based tool, *SurveMonkey*. I chose *SurveMonkey* to host this study because it met my survey needs and the program was easy and economical to administer. I obtained a monthly professional subscription to *SurveMonkey* for the duration of the study. The data results returned in an aggregate fashion anonymously and remain private. Collected information could be shared with others with my researcher's consent or if a formal request surfaced from a person of authority,e.g., PRDE officials. However, collected data remained the researcher's property (SurveMonkey, 2013). The Island of Puerto Rico functions as a unified educational system with a Secretary of Education overseeing the entire public system, divided into different 7 school districts, leading by a regional superintendent.

Data Analysis, Coding, and Interpretation

I made decisions on conducting the data analysis, and how decisions ought to inform, and be informed by the research design (Maxwell, 2013). As the researcher, I analyzed survey results with reasonably simple techniques, such as tabulating and coding survey responses as statistical data to organize and summarize findings in a way the data could be used and compared (Fowler, 2009). In the survey, I used Likert scale questions. The Likert questions traveled on a continuum, measured from one extreme to the other, and provided a tool that quantified the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs about something (Saldaña, 2016). For this survey, I ran survey data on the SPSS statistical

research software system. Next, I statistically coded survey questions responses to run results in SPSS. As researcher, I displayed survey question findings in charts and tables using frequency distributions and graphs. e.g., histograms. Descriptive statistics using measures of central tendency e.g., means, measured against standard deviations and variances (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). After the analysis, I explained interpreted trends and patterns from the data analysis, relative to the research questions and data findings.

Descriptive Statistics Research

I chose to use descriptive statistics research to conduct this study. Descriptive statistics research tools, such as survey questionaries, are designed to survey individuals about their experiences, habits, likes and dislikes, and to capture data from a large sample of a given population at a certain point in time (Given, 2007). For this study, I chose a survey questionaire which included multiple choice, yes or no, Likert scale, and open-ended questions, to be deployed to an entire school system (Rea & Parker, 2005).

In quantitative research, descriptive studies are concerned with the functional relationships between variables, hypothesis testing, and the development of generalizations across populations. The findings of descriptive studies are valuable in that they provide information that enables researchers and practitioners to define specific variables clearly, to determine their current situations, and to see how these variables may relate to other variables. Descriptive statistics show how much data is implicated in the study, its shape, and there are occasions wherein an absolute number provides the researcher descriptive answers to what the researcher is investigating (Cole, 2013).

Descriptive research affords a complete account of a group of people, a community, a situation or some other phenomenon, striving to provide a complete, accurate picture of the world, by focusing on factual details describing a current or past event (Given, 2007). When collecting descriptive data about various phenomena, descriptive research is connected most closely with quantitative approaches (including descriptive statistics), even though descriptive methods may also be used in qualitative research to provide background information for analyses of individuals' attitudes, opinions, and personal experiences of specific problem (Given, 2007). Descriptive research is the most commonly used approach in the human (behavioral) sciences because it allows researchers to examine conditions that occur naturally in the world where human activities can be scientifically explored, documented, and analyzed (Given, 2007).

Surveys as Research Instruments

Survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. It includes cross-sectional and longitudinal studies using questionnaires or structured interviews for data collection at a point in time (Babbie, 1990, as cited by Creswell, 2012). The use of a survey design provides a quantitative description of opinions from a population, and helps answer three questions: descriptive questions, questions about the relationship between variables, and questions about predictive relationship between variables over time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

There are good reasons to take the quantitative research survey route, for example; (1) if the program calls for the identification of factors that influence an

outcome, (2) the utility of an intervention, (3) understanding the best predictors of outcomes, and if testing a theory or explanation (Creswell, 2012).

Surveys typically collect three types of information: descriptive, behavioral and demographic (Fowler, 2009; Rea and Parker,2005). As a researcher, my intention was to collect all three forms of information for this study.

Advantages of using a web-based survey (p. 83; p. 11)

1. Convenience: This technique represents an efficient way of reaching potential respondents in a fast way, answering the survey in the privacy of the school's office or home.
2. Rapid data collection: Information can be collected and processed within days.
3. Cost-effectiveness: There is no need for postage or paper supplies.
4. Ample time: There is no rush for time in answering the questions.
5. Ease of follow-up: Participants can be reminded to respond to the survey via follow-up emails.
6. Confidentiality and security: Personal and or sensitive information can be easily protected or secured.
7. Specialized populations: Easy to access for populations whose email are readily available.

Disadvantages of using a web-based survey: (p. 83; p.12)

1. School's lack of access to computers, the Internet, or email accounts.
2. Non-participation self-selection process for those not compelled to use web-based technology.
3. The lack of opportunity to clarify any questions regarding the survey.

A survey is considered an easy efficient way to collect data quickly from respondents given: (1) the survey is extracting the concept or concepts of interest, (2) the participants are knowledgeable sources of the information needed, (3) the participants are willing to invest time to answer the research instrument, (4) the participants understand the questions in the same way, and (5) the participants follow the survey instructions and give honest responses to the best of their abilities (Wilson, 2013).

It is pertinent to mention that surveys possess the following strengths (Fowler, 2009; Wilson, 2013): (1) surveys can be administered to a large numbers of subjects using a variety of methods, including e-mail, online survey tools, regular mail, face-to-face interviews, or phone interviews, (2) surveys provide a stronger degree of anonymity than other methods of contact, like face-to-face interviews, (3) standardized surveys provide the opportunity to compare responses across groups and products. (4) survey results contribute to other research methods, such as interviews and focus groups, and (5) online survey tools allows for easy data analysis and fast interpretation.

For this study, I recognized that every research method also carries weaknesses (Wilson, 2013), and the quantitative research survey method was no exception. Some of the survey weaknesses were: (1) the lack of formal training in survey design issues by some users could affect the survey development, (2) surveys with many open-ended questions can generate huge amounts of data that take substantial effort to analyze and extra time to interpret, (3) return rates can be low with online and mail surveys, (4) online and mail surveys are not as flexible as other approaches such as interviews or focus groups, (5) surveys can produce survey fatigue, even for dedicated respondents, and (6) privacy laws have become a barrier to online and mailed surveys.

The Likert scale. The Likert scale is a technique used to measure complex concepts, such as attitudes, styles of media use, or satisfaction for aspects of life, and has become increasingly common for survey research into consumer behavior (Ferruccio, 2011). Surveys frequently count on sequences of Likert scale questions to measure individuals' general attitudes toward a topic, product or situation (Hitczenko, 2013).

The original and main application of the Likert scale is the measurement of attitudes (Likert, 1932, as cited by Ferruccio, 2011). Opinions drawn from attitudes should be easy to uncover using surveys, if attitudes are the results from a general belief unable to be observed. Then, a Likert scale could be used to measure the participant's opinion (Hitczenko, 2013). If attitudes or perceptions are general beliefs impossible to observe, then opinions derived from such attitudes are easier to reveal using the Likert scale, as Likert scales consist of a set of opinions on which individuals are asked to agree or disagree, as stated by Hitczenko (2013). Many surveys use the Likert scale. The procedure to define a Likert scale presents three phases: (1) formulating questions, (2) administering questions, and (3) analyzing scale (Ferruccio, 2011). Special attention is paid to the first and the last phases that are the more specific to Likert scales. As to the first phase, it is recommended that statements be concise, brief, forthright, and unambiguous while the vocabulary must be as simple as possible, according to the cognitive skills of the respondents (Rea & Parker, 2005).

Genesis of the Puerto Rico principal survey. The genesis of this research took place during the public policy course for Cohort 10 at the Educational and Policy class at George Washington University (GWU). A required public policy analysis of a current situation prompted me to think about the difference in working environments between the American and Puertorrican school principal, having or not having an assistant principal in place. In early 2016, a group of GWU professors visited the Island, accompanied by local GWU students. They had the opportunity to confer with members of the University of Puerto Rico's School of Education, with senior personnel form the Puerto Rico's Department of Education, and with school principals from different schools in the Manatí School District. After the meetings in person on the Island, and several subsequent conversations, a survey started to take shape.

Subsequently, I developed a quantitative web-based survey in late 2016 after a site visit to three different local schools in the Manatí school district meeting with educators and professionals from the local area. In the survey, I captured demographic data and principal perceptions and knowledge about the AP position.

Web-based survey design. In a quantitative survey study, the variables are related to a research question or to make predictions about the data results. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The web-based survey is an alternative where participants are asked to participate in a study that is designed to be completed and submitted by computer, as described by Rea and Parker (2005). My research study used a web-based survey questionnaire to capture, at a point in time, the perceptions, understanding and/or knowledge about the role and responsibilities of a *"possible"* assistant principal position, if added to the Puerto Rico school system. For the purpose of this study, I chose the

terminology “assistant school principal” to refer to the potential assistant school director, which translated in Spanish is; *Asistente del Director Escolar.* The assistant principal position mentioned in the now obsolete Puerto Rico Law #149, Section 2.17, *Ley Orgánica del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico* was not a position officially employed in the Island’s public educational system. Instead, when needed, principals delegate duties to teachers, counselors, and social workers.

Survey Pilot Test

I conducted a pilot study to validate the survey questions in a nonscientific test survey (N = 5). This pilot test helped identify any issues needing attention, helping the researcher to determine the degree of clarity of the survey questions (Fowler, 2009; Rea and Parker, 2005). Additionally, the pilot helped to calibrate the deployment process and to test the *SurveMonkey* product online. I conducted the pilot survey using five graduate students from the George Washington University as participants to collect feedback and determine if the survey questions were clear and appropriate. No comments were recorded by the students for the document in English. I received comments and suggestions from the PRDE IRB in Spanish, and later translated and incorporated them into the final survey version.

Data Storage

I stored electronic data online password protected. I backed up printed reports on an external hard drive and flash drives secured in a locked file cabinet. Survey results and coding systems did not disclosure personal identifying information, nor participants, or school location sites. I will destroy all data collected 10 years after the study’s completion.

Participants and Ethics Precautions

Potential risks to participants in the study were minimal. I followed all procedures as directed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) including necessary precautions to lessen threats to the participants. An *N* of 1,292 active school principals received the survey via email. The survey's initial letter informed participants of their freewill to participate and mentioned that no direct benefits was given for completing the survey. I sent follow up emails to participants on multiple occasions. The Puerto Rico Department of Education IRB was aware that *SurveyMonkey* software was deployed to collect the data. My dissertation proposal Chair and I were the only people with access to the survey results. As stated earlier, I will destroy all identifying information and data 10 years after the completion of the study. I informed participants of the purpose of the study, their rights, the voluntary nature of their participation, the potential rewards, and the potential threats of the research through the initial emailed letter to all participants. The major risk in this study could result from loss of confidentiality, especially if a survey linked to a particular school or school principal and answers to the open-ended questions displayed negativity toward the PRDE system. I offered to share research findings with the Puerto Rico Department of Education.

Validity and Reliability

Regardless of the research performed, to be valid and reliable, research must be based on fact or evidence, capable of being justified and measured by reliable research instruments (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). I conducted this survey with all active school principals at a given time and complied with IRB guidelines and precautions. In quantitative research, validity refers to the opportunity to draw meaningful and useful

inferences from scores on research instruments (Creswell, 2012). This research used descriptive statistics describing distribution of data and relationships among variables. The research study results were valid. I offered the survey to all school principals at the same time and with the same number of opportunities to participate. Validity involved two concepts simultaneously, internal validity and external validity (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). The research study assumed that all school principals were honest and candid when answering the research questions. The survey captured useful information from school principals on their perceptions of the AP position (Creswell, 2009).

Using the SPSS data research system, data was analyzed to develop perception and knowledge, trends and patterns from the Puerto Rico school principals. Cole (2013) stated that when using entire population data, instead of a sample, descriptive statistics can reveal what the investigator seeks to know. Assuming trustworthy measurement, descriptive statistics would be adequate to describe an apparent phenomenon within the whole population, and that phenomenon is known as the effect (Cole, 2013). The open-ended questions in the survey provided a second way of gathering perception and knowledge data; these questions without pre-existing response categories permitted the survey participants to answer freely (Fowler, 2009). Using the Likert scale questions, the scale response traveled on a continuum measured from extreme positive to extreme negative or vice versa, providing a set measure of categories that measured the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs (Saldaña, 2016). In addition, the survey questions collected principal responses on demographic and years of experience data, which impacted findings and trends. The multiple approaches to survey data collection and data analysis contributed to validity, as validity in quantitative research referred to

whether one can draw meaningful and useful inferences from scores on a research instrument (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Conclusion

Conducting the survey electronically allowed for a rapid turnaround in data collection (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, I collected data immediately since Puerto Rico's public school system experience a state of flux and simultaneously under both local and federal scrutiny. The school principal served solely as the leader and guiding light for both teachers and students. The school principals' responsibilities covered instructional goal's alignment, staff growth, and managing school's daily chores (Lunenburg and Lunenburgs, 2013). Although, the school principal set goals to establish a successful school in Puerto Rico, the school principal role existed without the support of an assistant principal. For this reason, this survey research explored, using descriptive statistics and demographic data, the school principal's perceptions and understanding on how adding the assistant principal position could allow principals to distribute their administrative and instructional leadership duties in PR schools.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In this study, I investigated Puerto Rico school principals' perceptions, knowledge, and understanding of the assistant principal (AP) position as well as the possibility of implementing the AP position into the Puerto Rico school system.

I used a quantitative methodology bound in exploratory descriptive statistics using an online survey to collect data from Puerto Rico's (PR) school principals. Using an online survey allowed for a rapid turnaround in data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the results, I reported findings from the Puerto Rico principals (directors) survey, a non-experimental, web-based survey consisted of 24 questions. The survey consisted of demographic, Likert scale, yes-no, and open ended questions.

For data analysis, I organized the results using an analysis of demographic survey questions, RQ correlation findings, RQ analysis, and key findings. Where needed, I cross-referenced survey question responses to answer the four research questions. I included frequency distribution tables and graphs of statistical findings and correlations in the analysis or appendices.

Data Analysis

The data analysis consisted of demographics, Likert scale data and correlations that answered the research questions. From the 24 question online survey, I invited 1,292 school principals (directors) to participate in the study with a 37.6% (n=486). To answer the two primary research questions, I constructed a series of survey questions (SQ). These questions were SQ15-Knowledge of the assistant principal position, SQ16-knowledge of Law #149 (that allowed for the AP position), and SQ18-a series of Likert

statements related to general administration and instructional leadership tasks. In addition, I added two open-ended questions to the survey. SQ22-what were the principal's expectations of the AP and what AP duties and responsibilities could principals delegate. SQ24-provided additional information related to the AP position. I further analyze survey questions using demographic data by participants' gender (SQ1), age (SQ2), educational level (SQ3), years in service at the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) (SQ4), and years of service as school principal (SQ5). I also analyzed participants jobs prior to becoming a school principal (SQ6), length of service as school principal in current school (SQ7), and number of schools served in as school principals (SQ8).

Demographics, Likert scale data, and correlations

The following is an analysis of the demographic data, followed by Likert scale data and correlation findings. The total principal participation was $N = 486$. The frequency counts for gender (SQ1) consisted of 68.5% responses from females ($n = 333$), and 31.3% responses from males ($n = 152$). One person did not answer the gender question. I used a chi square goodness of fit test to see if the sample was consistent with the population (Warner, 2008). The Chi Square statistic is commonly used for testing relationships between categorical variables. The null hypothesis of the Chi-Square test indicated no relationship existed on the categorical variables in the population; they were independent (Statistics Solution, 2020). Results of this analysis presented statistically significant differences in responses when comparing participants by gender X^2 (2, $N = 486$) = 67.54, $p = .00$), with a significantly higher number of female (n=333) over male (n=152) principals and (n=1) principals who preferred not to answer.

The frequency counts and percentages for responses to the demographic questions related to age (SQ2) indicated the three largest principal groups by age: the 51 to 55 range with 133 responses, or 27.4%; second the 46 to 50 range with 107 responses, or 22%, the 41 to 45 range with 83 responses, or 17.1%. Most responding principals (66.5 %) ranged between 41 and 55 years of age. Chi-square results suggested that differences due to age were not due to chance and showed significant differences between groups X^2 (7, N = 486) = 231.49 p = .00) (Warner, 2008). I compared age groups to each other to test for normality of distribution and to highlight overall differences between age groups. The distribution showed not normal, with most participants 41-55 years of age. Most groups differed significantly in terms of responses for the variable age. Likert statement answers differed by age groups. (See tables in Appendix C).

1. Principal answers on perspective of administrative support: The 31-66 and above years age groups ranged from (64.1% - 80.8%) strongly agreed. The 31-35 age group was at 80.8 % strongly agree and the 66 and over age group was at 87% strongly agree. The largest age group response 73.5% (n=97) strongly agree was at the 51-55 age group.
2. Principal answers on delegating administrative tasks: The 31-66 and above years age groups ranged from (47.4% - 62.5%) strongly agree. The largest group at 47.4% (n=63) strongly agree was the 51-55 year age group. The second highest group at 51.4% (n=55) strongly agree was the 46-50 year age group.
3. Principal answers on instructional leadership delegation: The 31 – 66 and above years age groups ranged from (28.2% - 50.0%) strongly agree. The largest group responses at 35.5% (n=38) strongly agreed for the 46-50 year age group. The

second highest group response at 28.2% (n=37) strongly agreed for the 51-55 year age group. In addition, the agreed response range was (19.2% – 35.7%). The largest combined age groups at 34.4% (n= 67) agreed represent age groups 51-55 years and 56-60 years. Both age groups had a 34.4% response rate.

4. Principal answers on perspective of instructional leadership: The 31-66 and above years age groups ranged from (57.7% - 80.0%). The largest number of responses was at 67.4% (n=89) strongly agree for ages 51-55 years. The second largest number of responses was at 71% (n=76) strongly agree for ages 46-50 years.

For the four categories mentioned above regarding instructional leadership, administrative tasks, and delegation, the 51-55 age group of principals represented the largest (or second largest in one case) groups of principals with strongly agree responses.

I collected data on, educational level attained (SQ3), years of service in PRDE (SQ4), and years of service as a school principal (SQ5). I presented two other questions: SQ6-what was your job before becoming a school principal and SQ8-how many schools have you served in as school principal. Seventy-seven percent of the principals obtained a master's degree, which is the minimum educational requirement to serve as a school principal in Puerto Rico; 22% obtained a doctoral degree, either Ph. D. or Ed. D. The mean for years working for the PRDE indicated 20.5 years (*SD* = 7.08). The total years of service as school principal had a mean of 8.35 years (*SD* = 5.41) and a mean of 5.35 years (*SD* = 4.55) for principals serving in the current school (SQ7) (See Table 1). Demographics indicated that, in this sample, principals moved into principal roles following a trajectory of Elementary to Middle to High school, in that order. The

principals reported (SQ6) that 229 (47.1%) transitioned from Elementary Schools; 100 (20.6%) transitioned from Middle Schools, and 87 (17.9%) transitioned from High Schools before entering the principalship. After analyzing descriptive data, results revealed that the mean years serving as a principal in the current school was 5.35 (*SD* = 4.55) (Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive data-Years of service as employee, as school principal, and as school principal at current school (SQ4, SQ5 and SQ7)

Variables	*N*	%	*M=Yrs*	*Md*	*Mo*	*SD*
Years of service						
As an employee of the PRDE	482	99.2	20.52	21.0	17.0	7.08
As a school principal	483	99.4	8.35	7.0	4.0	5.41
As principal of their current school	486	100.0	5.35	4.0	3.0	4.55

Note. The mean average of participants as employees of the PRDE was 20.52 years. The mean for serving school principals was 8.35 years and 5 years for principals in their current school.

Descriptive data- Male & female years of service as employee, as a school principal, and as school principal at current school (SQ4, SQ5 and SQ7)

Years of service	Female		Male		Full sample	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
As an employee of the PRDE	20.80	6.91	19.90	7.44	20.52	7.08
As a school principal	8.24	5.28	8.54	5.69	8.35	5.41

As principal of their current school	5.60	4.71	4.79	4.00	5.35	4.54

Note: The mean difference was not significant between females and males in the above categories.

Finally, principals reported the number of schools where they had served as 340 in 1 to 2 schools (70%); 70 in 3 to 4 schools (14.4%); and 7 in 5 to 6 schools (1.4%). A total number of 61 participants (12.6%) did not answer this question, making a pattern of missing data categorized as not-at-random (Rubin, 1976).

Principal Knowledge of the AP Position and PR School Law #149, Section 2.17

Other data collected from the survey revealed that a total of 65.8% participants (n = 320) had prior knowledge or experience with the AP position (SQ15). Data showed that 52.1% (n = 253) of school principal responses reflected knowledge of the AP position from prior knowledge or experiences in the United States whereas 13.8% (n=67) reported having prior AP knowledge or experience in Puerto Rico (PR) schools from private schools, military schools or universities. A total of 292 (60.1%) of the participants knew about Law #149, Section 2.17 (SQ16), which allowed for the school principal to nominate an AP meeting certain conditions. Law #149, Section 2.17 had the AP position embedded in the law, although not used in schools. When using gender to analyze SQ16, the data showed that more males, 53.9%, knew about Law #149 than females, 46.1%.

Likert Scale Statement Analysis

The Likert scale measured participant responses to six different statements. The range order included: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The following results from survey question 18 (SQ18) related to

administrative and educational leadership support and the willingness to delegate such tasks to a potential AP. I used the Likert scale statements to compare raw scores and percentages of participants' responses, $N = 486$ (Table 2).

Table 2

Likert statements with participant responses, raw scores, and percentages

Statements	*Strongly agree*		*Agree*		*Neither agree nor disagree*		*Disagree*		*Strongly disagree*	
	N	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*N*	%	*n*	%
1. I believe that having the support of the assistant principal would help with my administrative responsibilities.	360	74.1	70	14.4	29	6.0	11	2.3	15	3.1
2. I believe that having the support of the assistant principal would help with my responsibilities of leadership instruction.	325	66.9	90	18.5	33	6.8	16	3.3	21	4.3
3. I think the school principal is overwhelmed by daily responsibilities and chores.	399	82.1	48	9.9	21	4.3	6	1.2	11	2.3
4. I am not able to sufficiently direct the instructional leadership in my school.	249	51.2	123	25.3	58	11.9	30	6.2	25	5.1
5. I would delegate administrative responsibilities to	241	49.6	139	28.6	52	10.7	26	5.3	25	5.1

the assistant principal.										
6. I would delegate instructional leadership responsibilities to the assistant principal.	165	34.0	148	30.5	78	16	38	7.8	52	10.7

Note: Principal responses to statements 1-5 were strongly agree ranging between 50% and 82%. Statements 3 and 4 supported the other statements (with ranges 49.6% through 82.1% strongly agree).

Table 3 is a correlation of survey responses providing mean, mode and standard deviation. I performed additional correlations and tests to explore significant variables to survey Likert scores. Prior to exploring group differences, I performed a correlation test between items. Results revealed that survey items have significant and positive correlations to each other, with p values below .01.

Table 3

Correlation of responses, mean and standard deviation used to answer RQ1 and RQ2

Questions & Statements	*N*	*M*	*SD*	1	*2*	*5*	*6*
1. I believe that having the support of the assistant principal would help with my administrative responsibilities.	485	4.54	.93	-			
2. I believe that having the support of the assistant principal would help with my responsibilities	485	4.41	1.04	.76**	-		

of leadership instruction.							
5. I would delegate administrative responsibilities to the assistant principal.	483	4.13	1.12	.48**	.46**	-	
6. I would delegate instructional leadership responsibilities to the assistant principal.	481	3.70	1.30	.33**	.40**	.46**	-

Note: **p<.01. Statements 3 and 4 were not used to answer the research questions.

The following key findings come from the Likert scale statements. I answered the research questions primarily by statements one, two, five and six. Statements 3 and 4 supported the other statements. When I combined supporting responses, 92% of the strongly agree and agree responses reported positive for S3, and 76.5% positive for S4.

Statement 1 (S1). Responses represented a positive and supporting view for SQ18-S1 with 88.5%, or 430 responses on the AP helping with administrative duties. Gender presented no issue when looking at S1, responses reflected 88% approval of S1. Regarding age and S1, all age groups presented scores between 81.3% and 96.2% in reference to strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement. All educational levels supported S1 with an average of 73% or above. I found similar support for S1 based on Years of Service at the PRDE and Years of working as a School Principal with means of 20.39 and 8.31 respectively. S3 positive responses strengthened S1 findings.

Statement 2 (S2). Responses represented a positive and supporting view for SQ18-S2 with a combined positive result of 85.4% or 415 responses on the AP heling with instructional leadership. Responses based on educational level were above 90% on the positive, having the responses from the Ph.D.'s as the strongest for S2 with 92.3% response rate. The mean for participants based on years working as an employee of the PRDE maintained a similar mean from 20 to 22. As for years working as a school principal, participants' responses had an 8.27 mean for Strongly Agree and a 9.22 mean for Agree. S4 positive responses strengthened S2 findings.

Statement 5 (S5). Responses represented a positive and supporting view for SQ18-S5 with combined positive results of 78.2% or 415 responses on delegating administrative responsibilities to the AP. As for gender, both males 78.3% and females 78.1% positively supported S5. When analyzed by educational level, information showed that 78.1% supported this statement positively. When I analyzed years of service at the PRDE, the mean was 21.8 for agree and 21.08 for strongly agree. As for years working as school principal the mean was 7.96 for agree and 9.06 for strongly agree versus a mean of 9 for disagree and 6.83 for strongly disagree. S3 positive responses strengthened S5 findings.

Statement 6 (S6). Responses represented a positive and supporting view for SQ18-S6 with a combined positive result of 65% or 313 responses on delegating instructional leadership responsibilities to the AP. Males 61.8% and females 65.5% supported S6. The older the age range the more supporting of statement (S6). Based on educational level, participants strongly agreed with the S6 statement having a mean score of 19.4. This was about the same for other answers. As for years of working as a school

principal participants responded with a mean score of 7.45 for Strongly Agree and 9.04 for Agree. S4 positive responses strengthened S6 findings.

Correlations for RQ1 and RQ2

In this section, the following findings emerged when I performed cross-references for both primary research questions. By gender, more than half of male and female participants knew about the AP position in the United States, consisting of 57.2% of male and 50.5% female participants. Gender differences between male and female participants existed in reference to their knowledge of the Law 149 (r = -.202, p<.01) and knowledge of the AP position (r = -.087, p<.05). Data showed male participants more likely knowledgeable of the law (M = .54, SD = .50) and of the AP position of AP (M = 77, SD = .42) when compared to female participants (M = .33, SD = .47; M = .64, SD = .48). I compared age groups to evaluate score frequencies and percentages (Table 4).

Table 4

Knowledge of the AP position compared by age groups

Knowledge of AP position by age groups	Knowledge of the AP position in Puerto Rico		Knowledge of the AP position In the United States	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*
31-35 years	2	7.7	15	57.7
36-40 years	8	16.0	26	52.0
41-45 years	6	7.2	47	56.6
46-50 years	13	12.1	58	54.2
51-55 years	25	18.9	59	44.7

56-60 years	9	14.8	34	55.7
61-65 years	3	20.0	8	53.3
66 or more years	1	12.5	6	75.0

Note: The group with the highest knowledge of the AP position were participants 66 years or older with prior knowledge of the AP position in the United States (75%).

I considered Education level for comparison and analysis. Results revealed the majority $n = 320$ of participants (65.8%), regardless of level of education attained, knew about the AP position from the United States or from Puerto Rico. Educational level findings showed no correlation when answering the research questions.

Data from years of working as an employee of the PRDE revealed a mean of 20.52 years ($SD = .32$) in participant's years working as an employee of the PRDE. The mean average was similar across categories of knowledge of the AP position.

Those participants who knew about the position presented means ranging from 19 to 22.80 years. When I compared scores, the distribution of data was similar across categories. The analysis identified no significant results that knowledge of the AP position would be similar regardless of years working as an employee of the PRDE.

Similar to the years working as an employee of the PRDE data did not present significant differences across years working as a school principal. The average mean of years working as a school principal was 8.35 ($SD = 24$). The mean scores across categories of knowledge of the AP were 8.26 ($SD = .33$) in the United States, and 9.54 ($SD = .74$) in Puerto Rico. Those who did not know about the position represented a mean score of 7.74 ($SD = .41$). The analysis identified no significant results, which

would indicate that knowledge of the AP position was similar regardless of years working as a school principal.

When I performed a cross reference of SQ15 and SQ16, the following data findings resulted. The majority N=320 (65.8%) of participants knew about the AP position in the United States (n = 253) versus a smaller number of participants knowing about the position in Puerto Rico (n = 67). A positive and significant correlation existed between knowing Law #149 and prior knowledge of the AP position (r = .190, p<.05). Those who knew about the AP position presented less agreeableness towards delegating administrative tasks to an AP than participants who did not know about the position (r = -.092, p< .05).

Key findings on correlations RQ1

In summary, data analysis showed that (1) knowledge of the AP position presented a negative and significant correlation to the perspective of delegating administrative responsibilities to the AP; (2) gender presented a positive and significant correlation on delegating instructional leadership to the potential AP; (3) females agreed more with delegating instructional leadership than males; (4) the amount of years of working as a school principal showed a positive and significant correlation to the perspective of having the support of an AP to make instructional leadership more effective, (5) knowledge of Law #149 (having the support of an AP) favorable for both statements about delegating administrative tasks and instructional leadership. Most school principals knew about the AP position from knowledge or experiences from the United States and Puerto Rico (n = 320).

When looking at gender, participants above 31 years old knew about the AP position from the United States. Their knowledge of the AP position was higher with participants with a doctoral degree than those with master's degrees. From those 43.2% knew about the AP position from their knowledge or experiences in Puerto Rico. The mean score for years working as an employee of the PRDE was 20.52, similar across categories of knowledge of the AP position. Data on years working as a school principal did not present differences.

Key Findings on correlations RQ2

The data analysis showed that knowledge of the AP position, (a) presented a positive and significant correlation to the perspective of having support for administrative task (r = .141, p<.01); (b) had support for instructional leadership (r = .143, p <.01); (c) and had the perspective of delegating administrative responsibilities (r = .151, p < .01). When evaluating knowledge of the AP by *Yes and No* answers, not by regions (ex. in Puerto Rico and the USA), I found correlation results to be similar. There were: (1) significant and positive correlations between knowledge of the AP position (yes/no) and the perspective of having support for administrative task (r =.154, p < .01); (2) support for instructional leadership (r=.118, p<.01); (3) the perspective of delegating administrative responsibilities (r =.155, p<.01); (4) there were group differences when comparing those who knew about the AP position from those who did not; (5) those with prior knowledge of the AP position were more likely to favor having an AP to support administrative responsibilities and instructional leadership tasks; (6) school principals who had prior knowledge of the AP position were more likely to have a positive perspective towards delegating administrative responsibilities.

In summary, data showed that knowledge of the AP position presented a positive and significant correlation to the perspective of support for administrative responsibilities, support for instructional leadership and the delegation of administrative tasks. In addition, data analysis revealed those who had prior knowledge of the AP position desired the support of an AP.

Research Question Analysis

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the research study.

1. What are the perceptions of serving principals in Puerto Rico regarding the potential role and responsibilities of an assistant principal?

2. What is the degree of understanding and knowledge of serving principals in Puerto Rico regarding the potential roles and responsibilities of an assistant principal?

Subquestions:

A. Which areas of work will the school principal in Puerto Rico most likely delegate to an assistant principal?

B. What educational requirements, experience, and time in service, will the school principal in Puerto Rico desire to fill an assistant principal position?

Following are findings related to each research question.

Research Question #1

Using the data findings, I answered RQ1. Research question 1(RQ1) stated, *What are the perceptions of serving principals in Puerto Rico regarding the potential role and responsibilities of an assistant principal?* This first research question dealt with the perception of serving school principals in PR regarding future roles and responsibilities of an AP. RQ1 was partially answered by using responses from survey question (SQ)15

(Yes or No question) - *Have you heard of the assistant principal position before?* Additionally, the question was answered by SQ18 (Likert scale question) addressing four different statements. Statements used were one, two, five and six.

I performed a cross reference of SQ15 (Yes or No question above) and SQ16 (Yes or No question)– *Did you know that PRDE Law #149-Section 2.17 provides principals with a procedure to nominate an assistant principal if certain conditions are met?* The cross reference allowed an analysis of school principals' knowledge of the AP position and knowledge of the PR school Law #149. Data showed that a total of 67.38% (*N*=327) of school principal responses reflected knowledge of the AP position (SQ15) from prior AP knowledge.

When I analyzed statements of support towards the AP, principals positively viewed and supported all statements evidenced by participant's answers. For example, responses to all the SQ18 statements (Likert scale questions) regarding sharing or delegating tasks to the potential AP were supported with high percentage responses, *S1*-88.5%, *S2*-85.4%, *S5*-78.2%, and *S6*-65%. Although, S6 (*I would delegate Instructional Leadership to the AP)* had the highest negative response rate of 18.5% (90 responses selected Strongly Disagree or Disagree). Percentage scores were higher for S1 and S2, statements with the "*I believe that having the support…*" vs. S5 and S6, statements with the "*I would delegate…"*. Findings revealed females more inclined to delegate instructional leadership than males. Principals with more years of service in the PRDE supported having an AP position. Additionally, principals with knowledge of Law #149 desired sharing administrative and instructional leadership roles and responsibilities with an AP.

Research Question #2

Using the data findings, I answered RQ2. Research question #2 (RQ2) stated, *What is the degree of understanding and knowledge of serving principals in Puerto Rico regarding the potential roles and responsibilities of an assistant principal?* The second research question dealt with the degree of understanding and knowledge school principals possess regarding the role and responsibilities of the AP. A total of 327 responses acknowledged knowledge of the AP position. I answered RQ2 using responses from survey question (SQ)15 - *Have you heard of the AP position before?* The question was supplemented by answers to the responsibilities listed in open-ended sub-question SQ15(2): *If you know of the AP position, please mention three important responsibilities or tasks performed by the AP*. Answers from SQ22, an open-ended question, allowed the school principals to list what responsibilities and knowledge school principals should expect from APs. In addition to a cross-refence to SQ18, statements #5 and #6 related to the willingness to delegate administrative and or instructional leadership responsibilities to the AP.

For SQ15, school principals responded to what three important responsibilities or tasks AP's could perform. The participants listed: *Administrative and Instructional Leadership* as the main responsibility or task with 26.1% (48 responses); the second on the list was *Administrative* with 21.2% (39 responses), and third listed was a combination of *Administrative, Instructional Leadership and Discipline* with 12.5% (23 responses) as the top three areas. It is worth noting that discipline was mentioned among the combination of administrative and managerial tasks.

Responses for statements five (S5), *I would delegate administrative responsibilities to the assistant principal*, and six (S6), *I would delegate instructional leadership responsibilities to the assistant principal*, from SQ18 follow. When asked by S5 if school principals *would delegate administrative responsibilities to the assistant principal,* 49.6%, or 241 participants, selected Strongly Agree and 28.6%, or 139 participants, selected Agree. When combined, these positive responses represented 78.2% or 415 responses.

The survey's research answers revealed: (1) that participants that mentioned administrative qualities also presented a mean of 4.10 (*SD* = 1.18) in reference to their perspective of delegating administrative responsibilities; (2) fifty (50) participants that knew about the AP position and mentioned administrative qualities strongly agreed with delegating administrative task (50.7%); (3) the remaining 23.9% agreed with delegating administrative tasks to an AP; (4) more than half of the participants that heard about the position in the United States that mentioned administrative qualities, strongly agreed or agreed with delegating administrative tasks to an AP (81.2%); and (5) participants that heard about the position in Puerto Rico had a lower percentage, but more than half strongly agreed or agreed with delegating administrative task (60%).

The participants that expected instructional leadership qualities from an AP presented a mean of 4.05 (*SD* = 1.25) for delegating administrative responsibilities. Out of 85 answers, 49.4% strongly agreed with delegating administrative tasks, and 28.2% agreed. Another 83.6% of participants familiar with the position in the U.S. strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Participants familiar with the position in Puerto

Rico had a slightly lower percentage (60%) of agreement towards delegating administrative tasks.

Finally, I analyzed the answers of participants that mentioned discipline as an expected skill or quality (N=53) of an AP. I found: (1) 49.1% of these participants strongly agreed and 18.9% agreed with delegating administrative task; and (2) participants that had heard about the position in the U.S. that mentioned discipline as a quality, also strongly agreed or agreed with delegating administrative task (74.4%).

The data results from 136 answers that mentioned administrative qualities revealed 62.5% female and 37.5% male participants. These percentages remained similar across the categories: Instructional Leadership (68.3% female, 31.7% male) and Discipline (58.5% female, 41.5% male). (1) Most participants that mentioned administrative qualities strongly agreed or agreed with the statement on delegating administrative tasks (75.1% female, 76.5% male). (2) Once again, strongly agree or agree responses remained similar across the category of Instructional Leadership (75.9% female, 81.4% male). (3) Strongly agree or agree responses remained similar in discipline (70.9% female, 63.6% male). I analyzed data related to the years working as a school principal for the PRDE. Participants that strongly agreed with the statement and mentioned administrative, instructional leadership, or discipline qualities, had mean scores between 7.31 to 8.35 of years as a school principal.

For statement number six (S6), when asked if school principals *would delegate instructional leadership responsibilities to the assistant principal,* positive responses (strongly agree and agree) represented 65% or 313 responses. (1) Most participants that knew about the AP position in the U.S. and Puerto Rico also mentioned administrative

qualities (97.2%), instructional leadership qualities (95.2%), and discipline qualities (94.2%) expected from the AP. (2) When considering qualities, data revealed participants that mentioned sharing administrative tasks as qualities also strongly agreed or agreed with the statement on delegating instructional leadership tasks (64.5%). This proved similar across categories including instructional leadership (64.7%) and discipline (62.2%). (3) Most participants that mentioned administrative qualities also strongly agreed or agreed with the statement of delegating instructional leadership (65.9% female, 63.4% male). I analyzed data regarding years working as a school principal for the PRDE. Participants that strongly agreed with the statement and mentioned administrative, instructional leadership, or discipline qualities, had mean scores between 6.85 to 7.98 of years as a school principal. Those that agreed had mean scores between 8.36 and 10 years of service.

Answers to the survey questions revealed that knowledge of the AP position presented a positive and significant correlation of support for administrative responsibilities, support for instructional leadership, and support for the delegation of administrative tasks. In addition, those who knew about the AP position desired the support of a potential AP. A total represented by 327 individuals, or 67.2%, had knowledge of the AP position at the time of the study. However, 155 participants, or 32%, indicated no knowledge of the AP position. Further, when school principals responded what three important responsibilities or tasks AP's have, the participants listed combination: (1) *Administrative and Instructional Leadership* with 26.1% (48 responses), (2) *Administrative responsibilities* with 21.2% (39 responses), and (3) a combination of *Administrative, Instructional Leadership and Discipline* with 12.5% (23 responses).

Additionally, correlations supported the view from those knowing about the AP position presenting a positive view to have support to make more effective administrative and instructional leadership tasks from those that know the AP position and would delegate administrative tasks to the AP.

Subquestion A and B

I used much of the same data to answer subquestions A and B. Subquestion A (SRQA) stated, *Which areas of work will the school principal in Puerto Rico most likely delegate to a potential assistant principal?* I answered this question with responses to SQ22- *What would you expect an assistant principal to know and be able to perform in that role? What responsibility would you delegate to the assistant principal?*

I used data findings to answer Subquestion A. More than half of the principal's responses, or 52.1%, mentioned they would delegate administrative duties to an AP. Three top responsibilities or support areas emerged: *(1) administrative support, (2) general support in everyday tasks, and (3) instructional leadership support*. Responses to these open ended questions revealed that most participants have a positive perspective towards the AP position and expect general support from an AP. Out of 447 participants, 52.1% responded that they desired AP administrative support.

Data from participants responses partially answered Subquestion B. Subquestion B (SRQB) stated, *What educational requirements, experience, and time in service, will the school principal in Puerto Rico desire to fill an assistant principal position?* The answer to the question required responses to SQ22 - *Do you have additional information you want to share about the SP and/or the AP position in the PRDE system?*, an open-ended question. The majority of principal responses focused on administrative support

from an AP, rather than criteria for hiring APs. Statement 3, from the Likert scale, referred to principals feeling overwhelmed by daily chores, which supported findings related to AP administrative support.

Answers related to AP desired time in service or educational requirements did not surface. At the time of the study, the criteria required school principals in Puerto Rico to have five years of experience as a teacher and a master's degree to apply for the principalship. Therefore, an AP career path to the principalship could have similar requirements for education experiences, and years of service.

Key Findings

Data showed RQ1 and RQ 2 answered. More than half of the school principals' responses or 67.2% reflected knowledge of the AP position. Following are key findings from the data related to the research questions:

(1) Principal responses to survey statements strongly supported and promoted adding the AP position.

(2) Principals with more years of service would share administrative and instructional leadership roles and responsibilities.

(3) Principals with knowledge of Law #149 favored sharing both administrative and instructional leadership roles and responsibilities.

Summary of the correlations

Following key findings from the correlations:

(1) The correlations supported the view that adding the AP position would support more effective administrative, managerial, and instructional principal leadership.

(2) More than half of the principal's responses, or 52.1%, mentioned that they would expect to delegate administrative support to an AP.

(3) The top three responsibilities or support areas principals identified for the AP: *(a) administrative support, (b) general support in everyday tasks, and (c) and instructional leadership support*.

(4) Responses to the open ended questions reflected that most participants have a positive perspective towards the AP position, and they expect general support from an AP.

In conclusion, the key findings from this study support adding the AP position into Puerto Rico's public school system.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The assistant principal position did not exist in the Puerto Rico (PR) school system at the time of this study. Therefore, I conducted a descriptive quantitative research study to investigate how principals viewed instituting an assistant principal (AP) position into the leadership structure of the Puerto Rico school system. I did not assign prerequisites to principals to participate in the study, e.g., to have prior knowledge of the assistant principal role and responsibilities. First, the research study explored the school principal's perceptions about what the assistant principal position could contribute to the PR public school leadership structure. Second, the study investigated the perceptions of serving principles in Puerto Rico regarding the value and benefits to them of adding an AP position to assist with managerial duties, administration, an instructional leadership using a distributed leadership practice model (Spillane, 2006).

At the time of this study, I found assistant principals (APs) to be non-existent in PR, not appointed to serve in the Puerto Rico (PR) school system. In addition, the assistant principal position was not included or mentioned in the new Educational Reform Law of 2018 (Ley Núm. 85 de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico de 2018). Further, from the research, no evidence surfaced that any requests for the assistant principal position had been granted by the approval authorities, even under previous Law #149 (Ley Núm. 149 Ley Orgánica del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico de 1999).

According to Benitez-Canales' (2013) research, the school principal in Puerto Rico is overloaded with administrative responsibilities and instructional leadership tasks. As a potential solution, adding APs could have a positive impact on school principals' leadership effectiveness with APs assuming portions of the principals' administrative and

managerial duties (Howley, Andrianaivo, and Perry, 2005; Morgan, 2018; Oliver, 2005). Therefore, an AP would become a support agent and natural addition to the Puerto Rico Department of Education's school system.

Puerto Rico experienced many natural disasters such as, hurricanes Irma and Maria (2017), and the earthquakes from 2020, which affected the entire public system. As a result, principal, student, and teacher populations have substantially decreased in the PR schools since this study in 2017. However, the workload for principals remains strenuous, with principals performing more administrative and instructional work in their schools, short staffed.

Political Context

After the 1898 Hispanic-Cuban-American War, Puerto Rico became a war trophy. Subsequently, political efforts in the Island supported the creation of the Department of Education under the 1900 Foraker Law, passed by Congress (Foraker Act of 1900). In 1952, the US Congress granted self-governing powers to the Island colony, helping to move educational access for all. Law #149 (Ley Núm. 149 Ley Orgánica del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico de 1999) was the one mentioning the AP position. The most recent Education Reform Bill took place in 2018, with passage of Law #85 (Ley de Reforma Educativa de Puerto Rico de 2018), omitting the AP position.

Benitez-Canales (2013) stated that the highly politicized educational system was a dominant reason for many school principals leaving the ranks. In many instances, the PRDE became the refuge for political candidates that lost in primaries or on election day. A Hach Act type of local law does not exist in PR, and public servants can run and be active in politics. Candidates that are not favored in the election will revert back to their

career positions within the government. In terms of why school principals remain relegated when looking at school reforms by politicians, one could argue that the voting block of teachers is exponentially larger than the voting block from school principals. As of 2021, the PRDE informed constituents that there are 24, 240 teachers and only 845 school principals (3 to 1 ratio). These numbers highlight the fact that school principals are a small force in terms of gaining track or attention from the political sphere. Additionally, salary is an issue. PRDE online data shows the average salary, based on education attained, for an employee with a doctoral degree and for those with a master degree (*PRDE Peril Escolar*) approximately one third of comparable salaries in the United State (US Bureau of Labor Statistics). The Flamboyán study in Puerto Rico found that 34% of the respondents indicated that politics and bureaucracy were the main reasons that pushed principals to leave their jobs, followed by the issues of not receiving adequate compensation (29%) and the extreme demands and responsibilities of the job (28%).

Research Questions

I investigated the following two primary research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of serving principals in Puerto Rico regarding the potential role and responsibilities of an assistant principal?
2. What is the degree of understanding and knowledge of serving principals in Puerto Rico regarding the roles and responsibilities of an assistant principal?

I added two subquestions to the study.

A. Which areas of work will the school principal in Puerto Rico most likely delegate to an assistant principal?

B. What educational requirements, experience, and time in service, will the school principal in Puerto Rico desire to fill an assistant principal position?

The answers to these questions could provide the framework for potential policy changes, new organizational structures, and support for the school principal within the Puerto Rico public education system.

Theoretical Framework

I guided this study through the lens of Distributed Leadership Practice (Spillane, 2006) to deepen the understanding and possible intersection of the principal and assistant principal leadership relationship in Puerto Rico's public schools. According to Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond (2004), the distributed leadership perspective, from the human side, invites us to move past individual activity, taking into consideration how the material, cultural, and social situations impact human activity and take into consideration what the actor knows, believes, and does in a particular setting to produce a final product. The entire school benefits when the skills and insight of every member of the school team are utilized, and the power is shared (Hutton, 2014). Therefore, a distributed, collaborative, collegial, and cooperative leadership relationship between the lead principal and assistant principal could be established and conscientiously nurtured. The results of the study revealed the benefits of adding the assistant principal position in Puerto Rico public schools modeling Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership practice theory.

Summary of Results

Methodology

I used a quantitative methodology for this study. Using descriptive statistics, I administered an on-line survey as the instrument to collect quantitative data on trends, attitudes, and opinions from a principal population in Puerto Rico.

Research Design

Data collection. I bound this study to *N*=1,292 serving school principals in the Puerto Rico Department of Education system in the spring of 2017. The survey had a 37.6% response rate or 486 total responses. I surveyed principals via email using *SurveyMonkey* (www.surveymonkey.com) developing a 24-question electronic research survey to collect descriptive data. The survey used demographic, Likert scale, yes-no, and open ended questions. I chose to use a survey, distributed via email, because it was beneficial to the research and because of the economy of the design and the ability to have a rapid turnaround in data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data analysis. I coded data results from *SurveyMonkey* using SPSS. Using the SPSS data research system, I analyzed data results from the *SurvyMonkey* instrument to develop perception and knowledge trends and patterns collected from the Puerto Rico school principals. I sent the survey, *N* = 1,292 responses, to all school principals in Puerto Rico. The response rate presented 486 responses at 37.6%. I cross-referenced some survey questions to answer the four research questions. In addition, I used correlations, and chi-square results to validate the results (Creswell, 2018; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

Results. The research results answered RQ1, RQ2, and Subquestion A. The results partially answered Subquestion B. Survey answers showed that more than half of the school principals (67.2%) reflected knowledge of the AP position; (32%) of the participants responded having no familiarity with the AP position. More female participants, or 36.2%, responded they had no prior knowledge about the AP position versus 23% of male participants without prior AP knowledge. Participants with knowledge of the AP position from knowledge or experience in the United States and Puerto Rico were 65.9%, with respondents above 31 years of age. The Likert statements of support towards the AP revealed the participants positively viewed and supported all statements, evidenced by participant responses. Percentage scores were higher for statements with the "*I believe that having the support…*" vs. statements with the "*I would delegate…".* Females more inclined to delegate instructional leadership than males. The more years of service from school principals in the PRDE, the more the support of the idea of having a potential AP position. Additionally, results showed participants having knowledge of Law #149 favorable towards sharing both, administrative and instructional leadership roles and responsibilities. When I asked school principals (SQ15) what three important responsibilities or tasks AP's should have delegated to them, the participants listed a combination of: (a) *Administrative and Instructional Leadership* (26.1%), (b) *Administrative Responsibilities* (21.2%), and (c) *Administrative, Instructional Leadership and Discipline* (12.5%). The literature review supported the value of having an assistant principal to assist the principal with administrative, managerial, and instructional leadership (Barnett et al., 2012; Cranston, 2007; Hartley, 2009; Normore, 2003; Oliver, 2005; koru, 1993). The literature review existed in tandem with the statistical results

from the study, both of which supported implementing the assistant principal position into PR schools.

I listed the top three responsibilities or delegation areas for SQ22: (1) administrative support, (2) general support in everyday tasks, and (3) instructional leadership support. Only 1.4% of participants responded they would not delegate any task, especially because of potential power struggles. Data also revealed that half of the principal's responses, or 52.1%, responded they would expect to delegate administrative support to an AP. Responses to the open ended questions revealed most participants have a positive perspective towards adding the AP position; and (34.1%) of participants expect general support from an AP. Out of 447 participants, 52.1% responded they would expect AP administrative support, 7.4% mentioned instructional leadership support, and 9.8% considered both.

Data from the study revealed females more inclined to delegate instructional leadership than males. A total of 313 females saw the delegation of instructional leadership favorably. The bulk of the responses (203) came from participants between 41 and 55 years of age, having a mean of 20 years of service at the PRDE, 8 years of experience as school principal, and 5 years as principal at the current school during the 8-day survey period. Principals shared the following comments in their voices: (1) "It will be a great help to be able to have an AP that supports me [the school principal] with overloaded administrators tasks, and support the school principal with teaching and nonteaching responsibilities", (2) "I want an AP that works hand in hand with the school principal to improve teaching methods, and enhances standards for good school operations", and (3) "I think it is necessary to create this position (the AP position), the

principals are overwhelmed with work and do not have time to attend teacher needs or to visit classrooms because we are in the office attending parents, writing reports, and dealing with discipline issues. Maintaining institutional order takes a long time."

Lastly, my research revealed the majority of the answers to the last open-ended question (SQ24), *Do you have additional information you want to share about the SP and/or the AP position in the PRDE system?* related to the need from APs for general support for the school and the management of everyday tasks, the need for administrative support, and the need for instructional leadership support. Answers related to time in service or educational requirements did not surface.

In conclusion, the research results revealed a statistically significant rate (52.1%) of support for delegating various principal duties to an assistant principal in both administrative and managerial areas to improve school leadership. In addition, the survey results confirmed the need for principal delegation of some instructional leadership duties to an assistant principal. The data findings supported adding an AP position, thereby incorporating a two leader team approach in PR schools. This multiple leadership approach proved consistent with the distributed leadership practice theory model (Spillane, 2006). By using a distributed leadership approach and adding the AP position, PR school leadership would no longer reside as the sole responsibility of the school principal, but rather reflect a team school leadership approach.

Discussion

In a challenging school environment, the assistant school principal becomes an asset for the school principal, if there is synergy and coupling of vision for change and improvement shared by both school leaders (Morgan, 2018). With respect to leadership

succession, school principals should be mindful that the assistant principal one day could be at the helm of the school, perhaps emulating practices learned from the previous experiences as assistant principals, and more importantly, from lessons learned from the school principal (Barnett, Shoho, and Okilwa, 2017). As such, the position of assistant principal could serve as a training field for principals (Barnett et al., 2012). The principal and the assistant principal roles both have long histories in the United States of America. According to Lunenburg and Lunenburg's (2013) research study, management is a prerequisite to leadership. In addition, Lunenburg and Lunenburg's (2013) research showed that having strong managerial skills was as important as having strong instructional leadership skills for the school to succeed. However, for some reason, either political, social or economic, the assistant principal position did not transition into the Puerto Rico Department of Education's structure and their public education sector.

According to Benítez-Canales (2013), the lack of an AP adds a burden to the school principal's role in Puerto Rico, already requiring long working hours and added extra pressure from the lack of administrative support, excessive bureaucracy, lack of fiscal resources under local school's control, salary disparities and other community demands. In Puerto Rico, adding an assistant principal position to the PR public school system could potentially share administrative and instructional duties and help school principals better manage their schools. If instituted, the AP position could allow more time for principals' managerial and instructional leadership. Glanz (1994) stated that it would be a great undertaking by the school principal to take on all leadership responsibility because the nature of public schooling is too complex for one person to handle. Therefore, the assistant principal could provide extended support to the school

principal, helping change the school environment, and perhaps the learning gains by students.

Principal - Assistant Principal Factors

Research conducted by Cranston (2007) uncovered four main factors for participants seeking the principalship: (1) capacity to achieve work/life balance; (2) school location acceptable to family; (2) good work conditions; and (3) good remuneration. On the other hand, the following two reasons identified as potential barriers when evaluating the move to the principalship: (1) the ease of managing a work/life balance from the deputy school principal position (the extra salary was not worth the increased responsibilities); (2) a deputy role allowed for closer contact with teaching and learning providing a higher personal degree of satisfaction. The study found that assistant school principals (or deputies) would prefer a balance among the potential incentives and the barriers listed in the survey research before considering a move upward into the principalship (Cranston, 2007).

In Puerto Rico, Benitez-Canales (2013), found the following factors when principal participants gave reasons to resign or retire from the principalship: (1) upper management disregard from the school and principalship autonomy; (2) work overload due to the implementation of local and federal laws; (3) the intricates of politics within the department; (4) low salary versus high expectations and low school resources; and (5) a department highly bureaucratic.

According to a 2019 research study (Levin, Bradley, & Scott, 2019) findings revealed principal turnover as a serious issue across the United States. The national survey of public school principals reported, overall, 18 percent of school principals left

their post since the year before. In high-poverty schools, the turnover rate was 21 percent. While, notwithstanding, we understand school principals to be essential for providing strong educational guidance and direction for improved outcomes for students. Therefore, it becomes imperative that policy makers and school district's leaders remain aware of undesirable factors in order to create and build on favorable conditions that lessen turnover and improve success. On the contrary, sudden, or frequent turnover of successful principals can dislocate school progress, often resulting in higher teacher turnover, dissatisfaction, frustration, and ultimately, lower advances in student achievement.

Principal Burnout Factors

The Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) does not collect school principal burnout data, according to PRDE officials. However, evidence of principal burnout exists according to Benitez-Canales' (2013) research on PR principals. His research revealed school principals to be overworked due to excessive administrative and managerial workloads. In addition, the work overload resulted in a high degrees of discouragement, mental fatigue, and low job performance. Researcher, Benitez-Canales listed the following principals concerns and consequences that impacted school principals [burn out] over time: (1) overwhelmed with administrative and managerial duties, the schools principals decided to create an exclusive local organization that allowed principal voices to be heard through the ***O****rganización* ***N****acional de* ***D****irectores de* ***E****scuelas de Puerto Rico (ONDE)* or in English, the National Organization of School Principals in PR; (2) political and politician's interventions in daily administrative chores or decisions, personnel selection, and the many political appointees that found refuge in the PRDE, (3)

low salary or professional compensation received by the PR school leader, which averaged approximately half of the principal salary in the United State (PRDE *PerfilEscolar*), (4) high levels of bureaucracy in the PRDE, and (5) reluctance to assume the role of school principal due to a small salary increase relative to the required amount of work and responsibilities.

In addition, data from the report, *Principal Attrition and Mobility: Results From the 2016–17 Principal Follow up Survey,* by Goldring and Taie (2018), revealed that amid all public school principals in 2015–16, approximately 82% remained at the same school during the following school year (known as "stayers"), 6 percent moved to a different school (known as "movers"), and 10 percent left the principalship (known as "leavers").

Furthermore, answers to RQ18, Statement 3 and 4 supported these findings. Statement 3: *I think the school principal is overwhelmed by daily responsibilities and chores,* had a response rate of 92%. Statement 4: *I am not able to sufficiently direct the instructional leadership in my school,* had a response rate of 76.5%. Both statements, still support the findings from Benitez-Canales in 2013. These factors, coupled with my research, further evidence the need for a newly structured distributed school leadership team in PR, which includes as assistant principal.

PR Principal Leadership Succession

With regard to principal leadership succession, I asked principals, "How are new school principals inducted into their new responsibilities, without having a transitional path such as the AP position?" The PRDE has a School Principal's Academy responsible

to offer training and support to new hires. Due to Covid-19 precautions and other administrative office closings, access to the staff's academy was unsuccessful.

Instead, I decided to contact, via phone call, several schools at random. I have included comments from current school principals. I made the first call to an elementary school principal in the Southeastern portion of the Island, with 15 years of principal experience. The principal recalls attending a three week training between 2005-2008. At that training, topics such as fiscal, computer record systems, time and attendance procedures, and linguistic limitations among others were covered. The principal stated she later began a doctoral degree in Special Education to better understand and support parents of special education children.

Another school principal from an elementary school in the West, with eleven years of service stated that her training was done during the weekend at a hotel in San Juan. The weekend training session covered topics such as personnel procedures, how to use computer records and online platforms, budget, working timetables, and leadership topics. The third school principal now works in the metropolitan area. She said she was transferred there from a municipality in the center of the Island, from where she was born and raised and had her family settled. She said she felt the move was politically motivated. She attended her principal training in 2002 conducted during a weekend at a hotel where all new school principals stayed. The training was scheduled for new school principals only. New principals are identified as those hired during the last three years. The second principal stated that when she was transferred to the metro area school, no one from the regional office was there to introduce her as the new principal. She walked in the school and went room by room greeting the personnel and letting them know she

was the new principal. She told me that there was no support from the Regional Superintendent, that politics needed to be restrained from school business, and that communication at the regional level must improve. For example, she had a request for the same information from three different people, the same day from the same regional office. She concluded saying that she misses one former Secretary's capacity building session for all school principals, regardless of time in service, and that the salary scales must be revised soon.

Based upon research, for leadership succession, I suggest the PRDE create a career path trajectory with guidelines to promote teachers or staff to assistant principal positions, eventually leading to the principalship. It is important that this career path align with PR educational leadership programs provided by different universities in Puerto Rico, public and private. School principal preparatory programs should be mindful of AP importance, and how a two leader, principal and assistant principal, approach could help improve principal leadership in Puerto Rico and potentially, student performance. As many times in the past, change comes from outside the PRDE or the political structure. Regarding AP evaluations, principals could conduct AP evaluations, ideally with superintendent or PRDE verifications and authorization. However, I recommend, the principal conduct and approve all teacher evaluations, annually, before sending them to the PRDE.

The principals and teachers would have to unlearn performing duties with the principal as the sole school leader and embrace a two leader distributed leadership team approach (Harris, 2008, Spillane, 2006). From the research findings on delegation and sharing of administrative and managerial duties, the majority of principals would

welcome the opportunity to have APs in their schools. Perhaps, many new APs would be promoted from within the school ranks. Being promoted to an AP position with clearly defined tasks and duties assigned, and not from the informal cultural tradition of performing leadership tasks without the covering of laws and remuneration, could contribute building a professional career path for aspiring teachers wanting to enter leadership.

Proposed AP Model

As a proposed model based on findings from my research study, I recommend instituting a distributed leadership practice (Spillane, 2006), two-leader team model that assigns a principal and assistant principal to each school. I suggest creating specific roles and responsibilities for the AP and redefine those of the principal to remove confusion of duties. The new, two leader model (school principal and assistant principal) could begin as a pilot program for three schools in each of the seven school districts, one for each level, within the unified school district. Using distributed leadership practice, which is built upon the interaction of leaders, followers, and situations (Spillane, 2006), the AP and principal could operate as a team; although structurally the AP would report directly to the principal. Principals would remain as the key building administrators. Using a distributed school leadership team approach, I recommend re-assigning certain principal administrative duties to the AP, e.g., discipline, attendance duties, etc. based on data results from this research study on AP support of the principal and principal delegation of administrative and some instructional leadership duties e.g., teacher observations.

My data findings support that (78.2 %) of principals desired to have administrative duties delegated to an AP. Based on the study, only (64.5%) of principals

desired instructional leadership be delegated. Therefore, I recommend leaving the instructional leadership piece as the primary responsibility of the school principal. Although, the principal would not prevent the AP from participating in professional development teacher training, instructional coaching, or teacher observations to assist the principal when requested (Covey, 2004; Fullan, 2003; Weller & Weller, 2001). I suggest the PRDE and principals plan collaborative meetings to discuss the most effective division of responsibilities between the principal and the assistant principal. Referring to principal concerns from the Benitez-Canales (2013) research study, I recommend revised salary scales for PR school principals and assistant principals that align more with principals and assistant principals in the United States.

For an easier transition from a one leader principal leader position in schools to a two leader school distributed team with a principal and AP, the PRDE and superintendent could meet with the teachers and staff to introduce any new reporting procedure before implementing it, allowing teachers to ask questions and feel they are part of the new process. To improve student performance data, I recommend instituting the distributed two leader structure to improve student performance, giving leaders more time to positively impact the teaching and learning process.

The latest progress reports from the Puerto Rico's Department of Education, fiscal year 2018-2019, annual progress test known as the Measurement and Evaluation for Academic Transformation Test (Pruebas para la **M**edición y **E**valuación para la **T**ransformación **A**cadémica-META-PR) has downward percentages for all tested areas when compared with the 2017 test year: Spanish was -3.7%, from 48.8% to 45.1%; Math was -2.6%, from 32.7% to 30.1%; English was -3.3%, from 42.2% to 38.9%; and Science

was -1.3%, from 48.4% to 47.1%. The results showcase that students are underperforming in all areas as presented by the Puerto Rico Department of Education (2019). Please note that due to the extraordinary events that happened in Puerto Rico with the 2020 earthquakes followed by the COVID-19 global pandemic, the META assessment test was not administered to the students. Currently, the 2018-2019 School Report Card is the latest information available online at the PRDE.

PR Distributed Leadership

The distributed leadership practice (Spillane, 2006) framework focuses on what people do, and how and why they do it. If the AP position is transitioned into the PRDE, school principals would have to shift responsibilities, and the PRDE, would have to provide the space and training to have the school principal and teachers deal with the reality that the duties and responsibilities now will be shared. If APs are embedded in the school system, based on the study results, they could have assigned duties and responsibilities aligned with help of administrative duties (88.5%), help with instructional leadership (85.4%), and the delegation of administrative responsibilities (78.2%). The open-ended questions and responses revealed the following top responsibilities or support areas principals identified for the AP*: (a) administrative support, (b) general support in everyday tasks, (c) instructional leadership support, and (d) discipline.* A potential model to ease the transition of the new AP into the PRDE structure could include an academy for new APs where the following topics are covered: (1) introduction to the role and responsibilities of the school leaders; (2) computer resources and general monthly reports; (3) peer-to-peer learning assignments with feedback form the Regional Superintendent or designee; (4) mentoring programs and 360 reviews at the end of the

first year; (5) and the fundamentals of distribute leadership practice theory. Using the distributed leadership practice (Spillane, 2006) framework, principal can delegate leadership responsibilities to an assistant principal to improve principal effectiveness in Puerto Rico schools. Additionally, I would add the following training and support, based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics Professional Outlook Handbook, that list the following skills as critical for the school leadership position: (1) *Communication skills, (2) Critical-thinking skills; (3) Decision-making skills; (4) Interpersonal skills; (5) Leadership skills, and (5) Problem-solving skills.*

Argument for the AP Position

The results of the study make the argument to add an AP position valid because of the data findings, which support adding the position. The survey responses, from the sample data, supported the premise of implementing an assistant principal position. Further, the literature supported the importance of the assistant principal as a resourceful support for school principals (Oliver, 2005). According to Fink and Hargreaves (2003), sustainable leadership transcends individuals; leadership is maintained when leaders leave and have a leadership team because the team never endangers the development of others.

The research literature supports the benefits of having an AP position in the school. As such, the position of assistant principal serves as a training field for principals (Barnett et al., 2012). Although research showed AP respondents identified that their primary responsibilities continued to be discipline and the accounting of attendance, with a lesser emphasis on overseeing curricula and instruction (Weller and Weller, 2002). The distributed leadership practice (Spillane, 2006) theory focuses on what people do, and

how and why they do it. The survey research supported the potential request from school principals in Puerto Rico's public school system.

From the findings, principals support the addition of an assistant principal to share their managerial duties and instructional leadership. Using a distributed leadership practice approach (Spillane, 2006) Puerto Rico could create a more effective school leadership environment for the Island. Results from the survey conducted in Puerto Rico's public education system showcased the principals desire and support for adding an assistant principal position to assist principals with administrative, managerial, and instructional leadership responsibilities. Spillane (2006) discussed a view of co-leadership or leadership partners accepting individuals who could be required to take a leadership role, whether formal or informal. The research findings indicate a participant desire for a formal AP leadership team arrangement. The outcomes from this research also have policy implications for Puerto Rico's school system and school leadership structure. Further, the findings can be used for decision making by school administrators, policy makers, school principal organizations, professional networks, and serving building principals.

The literature substantiated that school leadership requires a great deal of work for just one person, the school principal, to manage a school alone (Glanz, 1994). In Puerto Rico, the school principal is working against all administrative and educational leadership odds, without the support of the AP. The research findings strongly support the use of an AP for both administrative and instructional leadership purposes. According to the research, all statements of support towards the potential AP position reported high approval percentages and were positively viewed and supported by participants. High

percentage responses (between 88.5% and 65%) reflected positive responses to all survey statements (SQ18-Likert scale questions) regarding sharing or delegating tasks to the potential AP.

The surveys' Likert statement responses suggested strong support towards implementing the AP position. The more years of service principals had in the PRDE, the more the degree of support for the idea of having an AP position. When school principals were asked what three important responsibilities or tasks AP's have, the participants listed a combination of *Administrative and Instructional Leadership*, *Administrative Responsibilities,* and a combination of *Administrative, Instructional Leadership, and Discipline.*

In today's challenging and changing school environment, the assistant school principal becomes an asset for the school principal and the school structure (Morgan, 2018). Further, from the study, the analysis of the open-ended questions revealed that school principals expect to delegate three top responsibilities to the AP: (a) administrative support, (b) general support in everyday tasks, and (c) administrative and instructional leadership support. Morgan's (2018) statement and the findings from the research study provide more support for adding an assistant principal position. In many instances, PR school counselors, social workers, or assigned teacher leaders serve as the "go-to-person" for the school principal. These school employees' step in and manage the school when the principal is off school premises, unconsciously and informally exercising a distributed leadership practice model (Spillane, 2006).

Looking further, PR counselor and social workers social and legal implications remain unclear in terms of responsibilities and liabilities when performing principal

duties. Traditionally, staff school contracts include a statement to the effect, staff are to perform other duties as directed by supervisors. Therefore, without the presence of an AP, school staff e.g., counselors, social workers, and teacher leaders, may be asked to assist the principal. Although, simultaneously, this temporary distributed leadership arrangement keeps the same staff members from performing their responsibilities. It is worth mentioning that staff and teachers may informally perform AP responsibilities without full legal authority, training, or additional monetary compensation. Although, many staff members and teachers perform AP duties when requested out of an intrinsic love for the school and the children. The faculty and staff conduct themselves in the AP role, informally, supporting the principal with administrative, management, and instructional leadership duties and responsibilities in a distributed leadership environment (Barnett et al., 2012; Normore, 2003; Oliver, 2005, Reddekopp, 2008; Spillane, 2006). Implementing the AP position in PR schools could work under distributed leadership practice, with formal designated responsibilities.

Implications

Several implications surfaced from this research study for educators and policy makers. Preparing future school principals to understand how the AP position contributes to effective leadership in local schools is an area to be further examined. Aspiring school principal candidates in Puerto Rico may use this research before moving into an AP leadership role within the PRDE. Louis and Wahlstrom (2001) stated that the main job, and the most difficult, for any school leader is to shape the school's culture to focus on student learning. This, research provided an opportunity for reflection on how new AP candidates would absorb managerial, administrative, and instructional leadership

responsibilities. Another study implications shows AP's as facilitators. According to Cunningham (2014), school leaders are expected to act as facilitators for change and become leaders that work to improve the school culture boosting school effectiveness transforming their professional learning communities (Sergiovanni, 2009). Finally, policy makers have a future role evaluating the need to restructure the tiers of school leadership in PR schools to improve school leadership and enhance student performance. Finally, policymakers have a future role evaluating the need to restructure the tiers of school leadership in PR schooled to improve school leadership and enhance student performance.

Conclusions

During the course of this study, the educational arena changed in PR. Accountability increased, transparency was demanded as the 21st century progressed, the stress on educational leaders increased, and the need for specific skills for better management and educational results became apparent. This research study investigated principal perceptions on adding the assistant principal role into the Puerto Rico school leadership system. The study added to the body of scholarly knowledge on the assistant principal position and contributed to data-based evidence for future policy decisions. The research findings supported the premise that school principals in Puerto Rico were ready to support the addition of an assistant principal position into PR's school system.

If instituted, this AP addition could have a positive managerial and administrative impact on PR's local schools. Distributed leadership in public schools could promote concerted actions by a combination and interaction of individual interests and capacities to produce outcomes beyond those that could be achieved by individuals alone (Davison

et al., 2014). It is my belief that the creation and development of a robust assistant principal position for Puerto Rico's schools could be a steppingstone towards the principalship, potentially creating a leadership succession pipeline to the principal position of individuals with firsthand administrative and academic skills and experience.

According to Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004), the distributed leadership perspective, from the human side, invites us to move past individual activity, taking into consideration how the material, cultural, and social situations impact human activity and take into consideration what the actor knows, believes, and does in a particular setting to produce a final product. Remember that for Spillane (2006), leadership is a system of practice, comprised of a collection of interacting components, including leaders, followers, and situations. According to Spillane (2006), distributed leadership practice is more than shared leadership. Rather, it counts everybody's actions, moving beyond the school principal and includes other potential leaders in the process, such as the assistant principal.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Based upon findings from the PR assistant principal research study, I recommend several future research studies. This research study's findings suggest that PR school principals are willing and eager to have the support of an assistant principal. Additional studies are recommended.

First, I recommend this study be replicated using a PR elementary school principal population only, since elementary principals represent the largest number of principals in PR serving schools and the largest group advancing into the principalship within the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE). Demographics also indicated

that, in this sample, principals moved into various principal roles following a trajectory of Elementary to Middle to High school, in that order. The principals reported in (SQ6) that 229 (47.1%) transitioned from Elementary Schools; 100 (20.6%) transitioned from Middle Schools, and 87 (17.9%) transitioned from High Schools before entering the principalship.

For a second study, I recommend replicating parts of this study, targeting new principal hires after the 2018 Public Education Reform Law to study their views on adding the AP position, since the assistant principal position was not included or mentioned in the 2018 law. The completed research study included the question about Law #149, Section 2.17 (from 1999) that allowed the school principal to designate an assistant principal. It could be beneficial to study if new principals, coming into the position after the new law (Law #85) was instituted, bring the AP position into context. Additionally, to inquire if new principals, hires knowledge of the AP position comes from prior knowledge, from discussions at the graduate level, exposure from personal experiences, or by working in other settings.

Third, I recommend conducting a research study to investigate how effectively school principals are operating with current administrative workloads and how they are reinventing themselves, having to lead without the support of an assistant principal during times of high stress and uncertainty, such as, the aftermaths of natural disasters experienced in Puerto Rico, such as Hurricanes Irma and Maria (2017), the 2020 earthquakes continuing since January 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, I recommend conducting a fourth study to explore the social, educational, and career impact on PR school counselors, social workers, and teacher leaders, who

temporarily act as informal assistant principals. Currently, due to the lack of a formal assistant principal position in the Puerto Rico school system, staff members informally assist principals. The Reform Law from 2018 (Law #85), Article 2.09, states that the school principal will report directly to the Regional Superintendent, as referred to in Article 2.10 list 27, navigating different roles or responsibilities attached to the principalship (See Argument).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Web-Based Survey in English

Puerto Rico School Director's Questionnaire

You will not receive any direct benefit, beyond the personal satisfaction of being able to help with your participation and with the responses and recommendations made to improve the working conditions of the school principals of the public system. No personal information you provide will be disclosed and your name will not be disclosed with the survey results. You should know and understand that the Puerto Rico Department of Education(DEPR) will not be liable for any claims that may arise as a result of the activities of the study or the information requested and provided through this survey. The DEPR is not responsible for any damages or claims that may arise from this survey or the outcome of the investigation. The DEPR is also exempt from any obligation, liability, judgment or claims directly or indirectly related to this investigation. This research survey is an independent and non-sponsored by DEPR, its employees and/or officials and does not necessarily stand in solidarity with the results of the investigation.

Puerto Rico School Principals Survey

1. Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study under the direction of Dr. Jennifer K. Clayton of George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development (GWU). Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary.

2. Why is this study being conducted?

You are asked to participate in this study because you are a school principal in Puerto Rico. Participating in the study is entirely voluntary; if you decide not to participate you can do so at any time. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to understand the current position of the school principal (school director in PR) as well as to consider how the role of the assistant principal (deputy director) might be useful. All directors of the DEPR public system will be invited to participate in this survey via the Internet.

1. What does this study entail?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will participate in a 20-minute online survey.

2. What are the risks of participating in this study?

There are no risks provided for in this study, however, you can stop participating in this study at any time. Your work will not be affected in any way if you choose not to participate or if you decide to withdraw from the study at any time.

3. Are there benefits in participating in this study?

You will not benefit directly from participating in the study, but the results of the study will contribute to the field of educational leadership and leadership preparation.

4. What are my options?

You do not have to participate in this study if you do not wish. If you decide to participate and then change your mind, you can finish your participation at the same time.

5. Will I receive payment for participating in this study?

You will not receive any payment for participating in this study.

6. Can you remove me from the study?

The researcher may decide to remove you from the study at any time. You could be removed from the study for reasons related only to you (for example, not following the study-related instructions) or because the study stopped in its entirety.

7. How will my privacy be protected?

If the results of this research study are reported in journals or in scientific meetings, the people who participated in this study will not be named or identified. GWU will not disclose any information about your participation in the investigation without your written permission, unless required by law.

All survey results will be completely anonymous.

8. Problems or Questions:

The George Washington University Office of Human Research, at (202) 994-2715, can provide more information about your rights as a participant in the research. If you believe you have been harmed in this study, you can report to the lead investigator of this study.

You can also contact the researchers who run this study at any time with questions or concerns.

Jennifer Clayton, PhD
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By continuing with this survey, you certify that you have read and understood the consent form reported above and that you agree to participate.

1. ***Are you:***
   - Male
   - Female
2. ***Your age is between:***
   - 25 to 30 years old
   - 31 to 35 years old
   - 36 to 40 years old
   - 41 to 45 years old
   - 46 to 50 years old
   - 51 to 55 years old
   - 56 to 60years s
   - 61 to 65 years old
   - 66 years or older
3. ***Your level of Education is:***
   - Master
   - PhD - Ph.D.
   - PhD – Ed.D.
   - Juris Doctor
   - Other: _____
4. ***How many years have you worked for the PRDE?***
   - _____
5. ***How many years have you worked as a School Principal?***
   - _____
6. ***What was your job before you worked as a School Principal?***

I was a teacher of:

a. Elementary School
b. Middle School
c. High School
d. Vocational or Technical School
e. Adult or night school
f. Private School
g. Librarian(a)
h. Counselor(a)
i. Social worker(a)
j. Other: _____

7. How long have you worked as a School Principal at your current school?

- _____

8. How many other schools have you served as an School Principal?

- 1 to 2
- 3 to 4
- 5 to 6
- Above 6

9. How many students are enrolled at your school?

- 01 to 100 students
- 101 to 200 students
- 201 to 300 students
- 301 to 400 students
- 401 to 500 students
- Other (specify):_____

10. How many teachers work at your school?

- 0 to 10 teachers
- 11 to 20 teachers
- 21 to 30 teachers
- 31 to 40 teachers

- 41 to 50 teachers
- 51 to 60 teachers
- 61 to 70 teachers
- Other (specify):_____

11. Do you work full time (at least 40 hours a week) as a School Principal?

- Yes
- No
    - If the answer is NO, how many hours per week are you contracted to work as a School Principal?:

      _____
      ___

12. In addition to the regular 40 hours a week served, how many hours do you spend on management and administrative tasks as a School Principal? (Consider tasks from your home and tasks before and after regular working hours).

- _____

13. How many hours a week do you spend working on administrative and managerial tasks? Do not include Instructional Leadership!

- 01 to 10 hours
- 11 to 20 hours
- 21 to 30 hours
- 31 to 40 hours
- Other: (specify): _____

14. How many hours a week do you spend working on Instructional Leadership?

- 01 to 10 hours
- 11 to 20 hours
- 21 to 30 hours
- 31 to 40 hours

15. Have you heard about the Assistant Principal position previously?

- In Puerto Rico
- In the United States of America (USA)
- In Latin America
- In Europe
- I don't know/I don't know about that position!
  - ✓ If you are aware of this position, that of the Assistant Principal, please mention three (3) important responsibilities or tasks of the Assistant School Principal.
    i. _____
    ii. _____
    iii. _____

16. Did you know that Law #149-Section 2.17 provides a procedure for all school principal to request an Assistant Principal if certain conditions are met?

- Yes
- No

17. I have the help of an Assistant Principal.

- Yes
- No

18. Rate the following premises:

Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Strongly Disagree

- ✓ I believe that having the support of the assistant principal would help with my administrative responsibilities.
- ✓ I believe that having the support of the assistant principal would help with my responsibilities of leadership instruction.
- ✓ I think the school principal is overwhelmed by daily responsibilities and chores.
- ✓ I am not able to sufficiently direct the instructional leadership in my school.
- ✓ I would delegate administrative responsibilities to the assistant principal.
- ✓ I would delegate instructional leadership responsibilities to the assistant principal.

19. What do you consider the most satisfying part of you work as school principal?

- _____

20. ***What do you consider the most difficult part of your job as a school principal?***
    - _____
21. ***What kind of support would be beneficial to you as a school principal?***
    - _____
22. ***What would you expect an assistant principal to know and be able to perform in that role? What responsibilities would you delegate to an assistant principal?***
    - _____
23. ***If the assistant principal position is created, what type of support would you expect from the PRDE for our AP?***
    - _____
24. ***Do you have additional information you want to share about the SP and/or the AP position in the PRDE system?***

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for your participation!

Appendix B: Web-Based Survey in Spanish

Cuestionario para el Director Escolar en Puerto Rico

Usted no recibirá ningún beneficio directo, más allá de la satisfacción personal de poder ayudar con su participación, respuestas y recomendaciones para mejorar las condiciones de trabajo de los directores escolares del sistema público en Puerto Rico. No divulgaremos en los resultados de la encuentra, ninguna de la información personal que usted ofrezca ni su nombre. Usted debe saber y entender que el Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico (DEPR) no será responsable de ninguna reclamación que pueda surgir como resultado de las actividades del estudio o la información solicitada y proporcionada a través de esta encuesta. El DEPR no será responsable de ningún daño o reclamo que pueda surgir como resultado de esta encuesta o investigación. El DEPR también está exento de cualquier obligación, responsabilidad, demanda o reclamo relacionado directa o indirectamente con esta investigación. Esta encuesta investigativa es independiente y no está patrocinada por el DEPR, sus empleados y/o funcionarios. El DEPR no se solidariza necesariamente con los resultados de la investigación.

Encuesta de Directores Escolares en Puerto Rico

1. Introducción

Le invitamos a participar en un estudio de investigación bajo la dirección de la Dra. Jennifer K. Clayton, PhD. de la Escuela Graduada de Educación y Desarrollo Humano de la Universidad George Washington (GWU). Su participación en esta investigación es completamente voluntaria.

2. ¿Por qué se realiza este estudio?

Le pedimos que participe en este estudio porque usted es un Director(a) Escolar en Puerto Rico. Su participación es voluntaria y si comienza a responder el cuestionario y decide que no desea completarlo puede parar en cualquier momento. El propósito de este estudio es entender el rol o puesto actual del Director(a) Escolar, así como considerar cómo el rol del subdirector (asistente del director) podría ser de utilidad. Todos los Directores(as) Escolares del sistema público del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico serán invitados a participar en esta encuesta en línea (internet).

3. ¿Qué implica este estudio?

Si decide participar en este estudio deberá responder a nuestra encuesta en línea que le tomará aproximadamente 20 minutos.

4. ¿Cuáles son los riesgos de participar en este estudio?

No hay riesgos previstos en este estudio; sin embargo, puede dejar de participar en este estudio en cualquier momento. Su trabajo no se verá afectado de ninguna manera si decide no participar o si decide retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento.

5. ¿Hay beneficios por participar en este estudio?

Usted no se beneficiará directamente por participar en el estudio, pero los resultados del estudio contribuirán al campo del liderazgo educativo y la preparación de líderes.

6. ¿Cuáles son mis opciones?

Usted no tiene que participar en este estudio si no lo desea. Si decide participar y luego cambia de opinión, puede terminar su participación en ese momento.

7. ¿Recibiré un pago por participar en este estudio?

No recibirá ningún tipo de pago o remuneración monetaria por participar en este estudio.

8. ¿Pueden eliminarme del estudio?

El investigador puede decidir retirarle del estudio en cualquier momento, pero solamente por razones directamente relacionadas con usted (por ejemplo, no seguir las instrucciones para responder la encuesta) o porque el estudio no se llevará a cabo.

9. ¿Cómo se protegerá mi privacidad?

Si los resultados de este estudio de investigación se publican en revistas o se discuten en reuniones científicas, los nombres o identidades de las personas que participaron en el mismo no se divulgarán. GWU no divulgará ninguna información sobre su participación en la investigación sin su permiso por escrito, a menos que así lo exija la ley. Todos los resultados de la encuesta serán anónimos.

10. Problemas o preguntas:

La Oficina de Investigación Humana de la Universidad George Washington, (202) 994-2715, puede proporcionar más información sobre sus derechos como participante en la investigación. Si usted considera que ha sido perjudicado en este estudio, puede informárselo al investigador principal de este estudio.

También puede ponerse en contacto con los investigadores que dirigen este estudio en cualquier momento si tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud.

Jennifer Clayton, PhD
Claytonj@gwu.edu / 757-269-2203

Carlos E. Gómez-Montes, MPA
borikua@gwu.edu / 787-426-0005

Al continuar con esta encuesta, usted certifica que ha leído y entendido el formulario de consentimiento informado arriba y que está de acuerdo en participar.

1. ***Género***
   - Femenino
   - Masculino
2. ***Edad***
   - 25 a 30 años
   - 31 a 35 años
   - 36 a 40 años
   - 41 a 45 años
   - 46 a 50 años
   - 51 a 55 años
   - 56 a 60 años
   - 61 a 65 años
   - 66 años o más
3. ***Nivel de educación:***
   - Maestría
   - Doctorado - Ph.D.
   - Doctorado – Ed.D.
   - Juris Doctor
   - Otro: _____
4. ***¿Cuántos años ha trabajado en el Departamento de Educación de PR?***
   - _____

5. ***¿Cuántos años ha trabajado como Director(a) Escolar?***

- _____

6. ***¿Cuál era su trabajo antes de ser Director(a) Escolar?***

Yo era maestro(a) de:

- Escuela Elemental
- Escuela Intermedia
- Escuela Superior
- Escuela Vocacional o Técnica
- Escuela de adultos o nocturna
- Escuela Privada
- Bibliotecario(a)
- Consejero(a)
- Trabajador(a) Social
- Otro: _____

7. ***¿Por cuánto tiempo ha servido como Director(a) Escolar en la escuela donde trabaja actualmente?***

- _____

8. ***¿En cuántas otras escuelas ha servido como Director(a) Escolar?***

- 1 a 2
- 3 a 4
- 5 a 6
- Más de 6

9. ***¿Cuántos estudiantes están matriculados en su escuela?***

- 01 a 100 estudiantes
- 101 a 200 estudiantes
- 201 a 300 estudiantes
- 301 a 400 estudiantes
- 401 a 500 estudiantes
- Otro (especificar): _____

10. ¿Cuántos maestros trabajan en su escuela?

- 0 a 10 maestros
- 11 a 20 maestros
- 21 a 30 maestros
- 31 a 40 maestros
- 41 a 50 maestros
- 51 a 60 maestros
- 61 a 70 maestros
- Otro (especificar): _____

11. ¿Usted trabaja a tiempo completo (40 horas a la semana) como Director(a) Escolar?

- Sí
- No
    a. Si la respuesta es NO, cuántas horas a la semana está contratado o labora como Director(a) Escolar: _____

12. ¿En adición a las 40 horas semanales, cuantas horas usted invierte en tareas gerenciales y administrativas como Director(a) Escolar? (Considere tareas desde su casa y tareas antes o después de horas laborables).

- _____

13. ¿Cuántas horas a la semana usted dedica a las labores administrativas o gerenciales (sin incluir tareas de instrucción)?

- 01 a 10 horas
- 11 a 20 horas
- 21 a 30 horas
- 31 a 40 horas
- Otro: (especificar): _____

14. ¿Cuánto tiempo a la semana dedica a labores de liderazgo instruccional (Instructional Leadership)?

- 0 a 10 horas
- 11 a 20 horas

- 21 a 30 horas
- 31 a 40 horas

15. ¿Había escuchado sobre el puesto de Sub-Director(a) Escolar anteriormente?

- En Puerto Rico
- En los Estados Unidos de América (USA)
- En Latinoamérica
- En Europa
- No sé/no conozco sobre ese puesto
    - ✓ Si usted conoce el puesto, Sub-Director(a) Escolar, favor de mencionar tres (3) responsabilidades o tareas importantes del Sub-Director(a) Escolar.
        i. _____
        ii. _____
        iii. _____

16. ¿Sabía usted que la ley del Departamento de Educación #149-Sección 2.17 le provee al Director(a) Escolar el procedimiento a seguir para nominar a un Sub-Director(a) Escolar bajo ciertas condiciones?

- Sí
- No

17. He contado con la ayuda de un Sub-Director(a)?

- Sí
- No

18. Califique las siguientes premisas usando:

Totalmente de acuerdo/De acuerdo/Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo/Totalmente en desacuerdo/En desacuerdo

1) Creo que contar con el apoyo del Sub-Director(a) ayudaría con mis responsabilidades administrativas.
2) Creo que tener el apoyo del Sub-Director(a) ayudaría con mis responsabilidades de liderazgo instruccional.
3) Creo que el Director(a) Escolar está abrumado por las responsabilidades y funciones diarias.

4) No tengo suficiente tiempo para dedicarle al liderazgo instruccional en mi escuela.
5) Delegaría responsabilidades administrativas al Sub-Director(a).
6) Delegaría responsabilidades de liderazgo instruccional al Sub-Director (a).

19. ¿Qué considera como la parte más satisfactoria de su trabajo como Director(a) Escolar?

- _____

20. ***¿Qué considera como la parte más difícil de su trabajo como Director(a) Escolar?***

- _____

21. ¿Qué tipo de apoyo sería beneficioso para usted como Director(a) Escolar?

- _____

22. ¿Qué esperaría que un Sub-Director(a) conociera y pudiera hacer en ese rol? ¿Qué responsabilidades puede delegar al Sub-Director(a)?

- _____

23. Si el puesto de Sub-Director fuera creado, ¿qué apoyo usted espera del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico 9DEPR) para su Sub-Director?

- _____

24. ¿Tiene alguna información adicional que desea compartir sobre el puesto del Director(a) y Sub-Director(a) Escolar en Puerto Rico? (Abunde en el espacio provisto).

_____

_____

¡Gracias por su participación!

Appendix C: Gender Statement Answers to Likert Statements

Gender statement answers for Likert statements 1,2,5,6.

SQ 1:I believe that having the support of the assistant principal would help with my administrative responsibilities.	Female		Male	
	n	%	*n*	%
Strongly agree	246	74.1	113	74.3
Agree	49	14.8	21	13.8
SQ 2: I believe that having the support of the assistant principal would help with my responsibilities of leadership instruction.	Female		Male	
	n	%	*n*	%
Strongly agree	226	68.1	98	64.5
Agree	58	17.5	32	21.1
SQ5: I would delegate administrative responsibilities to the assistant principal.	Female		Male	
	n	%	*n*	%
Strongly agree	167	50.3	74	49.3
Agree	93	28.0	45	30.0
SQ 6: I would delegate instructional leadership responsibilities to the assistant principal.	Female		Male	
	n	%	*n*	%
Strongly agree	113	34.2	52	34.7
Agree	106	32.1	42	28.0

Note: By gender, the strongly agree and agree answers are similar for males and females with no distinguishing differences.

Appendix D: Response differences by gender and age demographics

*Demographic variables * Perspective of administrative support to four Likert statements*

Demographic variables		*Strongly agree*		*Agree*		*Neither agree nor disagree*		*Disagree*		*Strongly disagree*	
		n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender	Female	246	74.1	49	14.8	19	5.7	7	2.1	11	3.3
	Male	113	74.3	21	13.8	10	6.6	4	2.6	4	2.6
Age group	31-35	21	80.8	4	15.4	0	0	1	3.8	0	0
	36-40	34	68.0	9	18.0	3	6.0	1	2.0	3	6.0
	41-45	63	75.9	11	13.3	5	6.0	1	1.2	3	3.6
	46-50	85	79.4	13	12.1	5	4.7	2	1.9	2	1.9
	51-55	97	73.5	20	15.2	9	6.8	4	3.0	3	1.5
	56-60	41	64.1	11	17.2	6	9.4	2	3.1	4	6.3
	61-65	12	80.0	2	13.3	0	0	0	0	1	6.7
	66 or more	7	87.5	0	0	1	12.5	0	0	0	0

*Demographic variables * Perspective of delegating administrative tasks*

Demographic variables		Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender	Female	167	50.3	93	28.0	36	10.8	15	4.5	21	6.3
	Male	74	49.3	45	30.0	16	10.7	11	7.3	4	2.7
Age group	31-35	14	53.8	10	38.5	0	0	1	3.8	1	3.8
	36-40	24	48.0	12	24.0	6	12.0	4	8.0	4	8.0
	41-45	41	49.4	23	27.7	11	13.3	4	4.8	4	4.8
	46-50	55	51.4	29	27.1	14	13.1	6	5.6	3	2.8
	51-55	63	47.4	43	32.3	13	9.8	7	5.3	4	3.0
	56-60	31	48.4	18	28.1	5	7.8	3	4.7	7	10.9
	61-65	8	53.3	2	13.3	2	13.3	1	6.7	2	13.3
	66 or more	5	62.5	2	25.0	1	12.5	0	0	0	0

*Demographic variables * Perspective of delegating instructional leadership*

Demographic variables		Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender	Female	113	34.2	106	32.1	52	15.8	21	6.4	38	11.5
	Male	52	34.7	42	28.0	26	17.3	17	11.3	13	8.7
Age group	31-35	11	42.3	5	19.2	3	11.5	3	11.5	4	15.4
	36-40	20	40.8	15	30.6	6	12.2	4	8.2	4	8.2
	41-45	29	35.4	25	30.5	11	13.4	8	9.8	9	11.0
	46-50	38	35.5	29	27.1	22	20.6	7	6.5	11	10.3
	51-55	37	28.2	45	34.4	22	16.8	14	10.7	13	9.9
	56-60	20	31.3	22	34.4	12	18.8	1	1.6	9	14.1
	61-65	6	42.9	5	35.7	1	7.1	0	0	2	14.3
	66 or more	4	50.0	2	25.0	1	12.5	1	12.5	0	0

*Demographic variables * Perspective of instructional leadership*

Demographic variables		*Strongly agree*		*Agree*		*Neither agree nor disagree*		*Disagree*		*Strongly disagree*	
		n	%	*n*	%	*N*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender	Female	226	68.1	58	17.5	22	6.6	6	3.9	5	3.3
	Male	98	64.5	32	21.1	11	7.2	10	3.0	16	4.8
Age group	31-35	15	57.7	6	23.1	3	11.5	2	7.7	0	0
	36-40	30	60.0	10	20.0	5	10.0	1	2.0	4	8.0
	41-45	58	69.9	16	19.3	3	3.6	2	2.4	4	4.8
	46-50	76	71.0	17	15.9	6	5.6	3	2.8	5	4.7
	51-55	89	67.4	23	17.4	11	8.3	6	4.5	2	2.3
	56-60	39	60.9	15	23.4	4	6.3	2	3.1	4	6.3
	61-65	12	80.0	2	13.3	0	0	0	0	1	6.7
	66 or more	6	75.0	1	12.5	1	12.5	0	0	0	0

Note: Four open ended questions were examined. Answers differed by age groups.

1. Principal answers on perspective of administrative support: The 31-66 and above years age groups ranged from (64.1% - 80.8%) strongly agreed. The 31-35 age group was at 80.8 % strongly agree and the 66 and over age group was at 87% strongly agree. The lowest age group response at 64.1 % (n=41)strongly agree was at the 56-60 year range. The largest age group response 73.5% (n=97) strongly agree was at the 51-55 age group.

2. Principal answers on delegating administrative tasks: The 31-66 and above years age groups ranged from (47.4% - 62.5%) strongly agree. The largest group at 47.4% (n=63) strongly agree was the 51-55 year age group. The second highest group at 51.4% (n=55) strongly agree was the 46-50 year age group.

3. Principal answers on instructional leadership delegation: The 31 – 66 and above years age groups ranged from (28.2% - 50.0%) strongly agree. The largest group

responses at 35.5% (n=38) strongly agreed for the 46-50 year age group. The second highest group response at 28.2% (n=37) strongly agreed for the 51-55 year age group. In addition, the agreed response range was (19.2% – 35.7%). The largest combined age groups at 34.4% (n= 67) agreed represent age groups 51-55 years and 56-60 years. Both age groups had a 34.4% response rate.

4. Principal answers on perspective of instructional leadership: The 31-66 and above years age groups ranged from (57.7% - 80.0%). The largest number of responses was at 67.4% (n=89) strongly agree for ages 51-55 years. The second largest number of responses was at 71% (n=76) strongly agree for ages 46-50 years.