# OKLAHOMA CAREER TECH SUPERINTENDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION EXPERIENCES

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PREPARATION EXPERIENCES

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Along with meeting the requirements for this degree, I hope this research will ignite more conversations, research, and transformations to ensure that Career Tech administrators are being prepared to lead our educational system in Oklahoma. My passion to assist in the development of future CTE administrators has been strengthened and I believe this process has assisted my aspiration to become a stronger leader for our state and Career Tech system.

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Abstract:

Research has shown that effective educational leadership preparation is a key component in the success of school administrators (Johnson & Uline, 2005; McCarthy, 2015). Effective preparation of educational leaders is an important issue facing education, because it not only affects student achievement and teacher quality, but also is a vital component in maintaining the quality and culture within our schools. However, a discrepancy still seems to exist as it relates to a "one size fits all" approach to developing and preparing school leaders. While the majority of the knowledge, skills, and competencies apply to all school leaders, differences appear to exist as it relates to the type of educational institution the school administrator aspires to lead. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions, through the lens of the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development (Katz, 1955), of CTE Superintendents related to how their educational leadership preparation program prepared them for leadership in Career and Technology Education. This case study involved in-depth interviews with eight Oklahoma Career Tech Superintendents along with the collection of documents and artifacts for triangulation purposes to add validity and credibility to the data. Through the data analysis, three themes emerged including: (a) there was a lack of applicable content in educational leadership programs for CTE leadership positions, (b) the knowledge and skills in the educational leadership programs were focused on K12 school leadership which is different than needed in CTE leadership, and (c) specific knowledge as well as technical, human, and conceptual skills are needed in the role as a CTE Superintendent. This study suggests and identified specific technical, human, and conceptual skills that are needed by individuals aspiring to become an administrator or a Superintendent in a Career Tech center. These findings will assist the required educational leadership preparation programs ensure future administrators are adequately prepared for their role of leadership in the CTE setting.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

School reform and improvement have been the focus of decades of research, policy, and debate among educators and stakeholders. Improving student learning and their preparation for college, work, and life have been the driving force for making mandated and voluntary changes to classroom practices and school initiatives. Research has shown that an effective classroom teacher is a major attributing factor in student success. However, "for more than 25 years, educational researchers have emphasized the role that school leaders play in creating schools and school districts where diverse populations of students achieve high levels of academic success" (Johnson & Uline, 2005, p. 45). Thessin and Clayton (2013) noted, "it is no longer questioned that the school leader has a significant influence on both what and how students learn" (p. 790).

The school administrator's role is to serve as the visionary leader for the district, equipped with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to improve all aspects of the educational environment which influences student learning and success (Johnson & Uline, 2005; McCord, 2009). McCarthy (2015) stated, "effective school leadership positively influences student learning and school improvement and that how these leaders are prepared is important" (p. 416). The relevant and effective preparation of school superintendents is critical to their professional success as the school leader. Additionally, "the preparation of superintendents is a critical component, an essential element, of systemic education reform" (Peterson, Fusarelli, & Kowalski, 2008, p. 1).

However, a discrepancy still seems to exist as it relates to a "one size fits all" approach to developing and preparing school leaders. While the majority of the knowledge, skills, and competencies apply to all school leaders, differences appear to exist as it relates to the type of educational institution the school administrator aspires to lead. Similar to athletes who train for competition in a specific sport, commonalities may exist in their diet, training and general preparation. However, an athlete must also train for the specific sport in which he/she plans to compete. Many different types of running competitions are available, all with different strategies and philosophies for both preparation and victory. Therefore, an athlete competing in a cross-country competition will train and prepare differently than one who is competing in a one-hundred-yard dash.

Similarly, aspiring educational leaders who desire to be an administrator of a public school, alternative school or a Career and Technology Education (CTE) school all need to have a common base of knowledge, skills, and competencies. Due to the differences in the educational environments, these leaders may also need specific training to be an effective and visionary leader for the different educational setting. Research by Price, Martin, and Robertson (2010) determined, "Leaders who work with youth in institutional or alternative school settings typically receive no specialized training intended to equip them to serve in schools with these often difficult-to-teach students in the context of these atypical instructional settings" (p. 300). Similarly, Viviano (2012) noted, "It is equally as imperative for today's CTE leaders to stay abreast of current and future trends in business and industry and to encourage technical educators to stay current in their professional and trade areas as well as in pedagogy" (p. 51). Therefore, the "one size fits all" approach to preparing school

superintendents must be examined to determine what changes are necessary to properly prepare these future leaders for their careers.

## Problem Statement

Research has shown that effective educational leadership preparation is a key component in the success of school administrators (Johnson & Uline, 2005; McCarthy, 2015). States and universities have invested heavily in administration preparation policies and programs as well as professional standards designed to prepare future administrators to be successful leaders in districts and schools. Effective preparation of educational leaders is an important issue facing education, because it not only affects student achievement and teacher quality, but also is a vital component in maintaining the quality and culture within our schools.

Despite these efforts, research shows that these preparation programs have been beneficial to the success of administrators in some educational environments, but not in others (Fry, Bottoms, O'Neill & Walker, 2007; Levine, 2005; Robicheau & Haar, 2008). Superintendent preparation programs are "leaving many, particularly new, superintendents ill-equipped for increasing accountability demands and fiscal pressures in leading districts" (McCord, 2009, p. 1). Robicheau and Haar (2008) stated, "Over the last several years the relevance of administrative preparation programs has been questioned. The concern surfaces around whether or not programs are preparing school leaders to deal with the myriad of challenges that accompany school leadership" (p. 1).

In the CTE system, this anomaly may exist because the skills or competencies required of a leader of a Career Tech center may differ from the skills, and competencies that

are included in the professional standards developed for leaders of common education. While the knowledge, skills and competencies are equally important for CTE Superintendents, these leaders need additional preparation due to the differing training populations including adults, industry training, and business development. Viviano (2012) noted, "it is equally as imperative for today's CTE leaders to stay abreast of current and future trends in business and industry" (p. 51). Therefore, a need exists to identify the additional knowledge, skills, and competencies to ensure these leaders are adequately prepared, not just licensed for their positions.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions, through the lens of the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development (Katz, 1955), of CTE Superintendents related to how their educational leadership preparation program prepared them for leadership in Career and Technology Education.

## Research Questions

1.) How do CTE Superintendents describe their educational leadership preparation experiences?
2.) How do CTE Superintendents perceive the utility of skills learned in their preparation programs?
3.) What knowledge or skills do CTE Superintendents identify as important to the preparation of aspiring Career Tech leaders?

4.) What technical, human, and conceptual skills, as represented in the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development, do CTE Superintendents believe are necessary for leadership in the CTE setting?

## Epistemological Framework

This qualitative research was designed to discover the perceptions of the educational leadership experiences of CTE administrators. Creswell (2014) described a constructivism approach by, "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences" (p. 24). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "reality is socially constructed" and "there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event" (p. 9). This research assisted in identifying the differences in the constructed perceptions of the CTE administrator's educational preparation experiences.

## Theoretical Framework

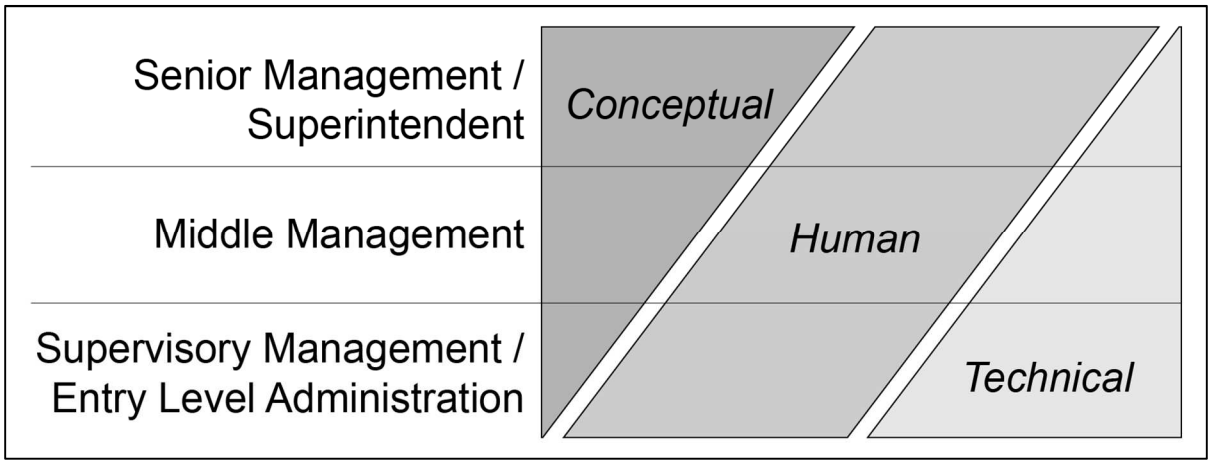
In an attempt to describe the perceptions of CTE Superintendents and determine if the knowledge, skills, and competencies gain through the educational leadership program has prepared them for a leadership in a Career Tech center, a Skills Theory of leadership development framework was utilized. This model provided a lens in which to examine the perceived preparation experiences of CTE district educational leaders. The Skills Theory takes a leader-centered approach to studying leadership and was built on the assumption that the skills needed for successful leadership can be developed through career experiences (Northouse, 2010).

In 1955, Robert Katz was attempting to address leadership from the approach of developable skills as opposed to the traditional perspective of inherent leadership traits, that could be attributed to an individual's success (Northouse, 2010). Katz grouped these essential and developable skills into three distinct categories including technical, human, and conceptual skills which as collectively referred to as the Three-Skill Approach (Northouse, 2010; Rowe & Guerro, 2013). Each of the skills were believed to have instrumental value to an individual for their leadership role, with varying degrees of utilization based on their leadership position.

The technical skills, which have a higher degree of application to the entry or supervisory level of administration, is comprised of the knowledge for "a specific kind of activity" that involves "methods, processes, procedures, or techniques" (Katz, 1955, p. 34). These are the skills needed for the daily leadership and management of a division within an organization to ensure effective operations. The human skills focus on a leader's ability to work and communicate with other people. As Katz (1955) stated, "human skill is the executive's ability to work effectively as a group member and to build cooperative effort within the team" (p. 34). Effective human skills are needed at all levels of leadership, from entry level to senior leadership. As a leader progresses in positional responsibility, the conceptual skills become increasingly important. The conceptual skills are the "ability to see the enterprise as a whole" and "how the various functions of the organization depend on one another" (Katz, 1955, p. 35). As the senior leader, individuals must have the skills to not only understand the daily operations and effectively work with people, but also the conceptual skills to lead the entire organization for future success. Figure 1.1 illustrates the application of the technical, human, and conceptual skills to leadership positions.

Figure 1

Three-Skills Approach to Leadership Development




SOURCE: Adapted from "Skills of an Effective Administrator," by R. L. Katz, 1955, Harvard Business Review, 33(1), p. 33-42.

The Three-Skills Approach to leadership development served as the theoretical framework for this research as it provides a systematic approach to the development and utilization of technical, human, and conceptual skills for leaders. This framework assisted the research by providing a lens to gain an understanding on the essential educational preparation requirements for administrative success in a Career Tech school.

## Procedures

To accomplish the goals of this research endeavor, a qualitative case study methodology was chosen. Qualitative research facilitates an in-depth and detailed study process to explore and gain an understanding of the meaning of a reoccurring issue (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). The case study design strategy dictates the researcher as the primary data collection instrument that uses multiple data sources including interviews, observations, and documents that are collected throughout an extended period of time to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015).

## Participants

The study population for this research was focused on Superintendents actively working within the twenty-nine Career Tech schools in Oklahoma. A purposeful sample of eight administrators was included in this research to be selected based on the criteria of years of service as a CTE Superintendent. Four of the administrators had completed their first year as a superintendent but had not exceeded their third year, and four had more than three years' but less than ten years' experience in their district leadership role. These selection criteria were designed based on the common assumption of individuals requiring three years to achieve mastery of their job performance.

The maximum of ten years as a CTE superintendent was chosen based on the likelihood of the individuals encountering similar higher education preparation requirements and having recent experiences in the mastery of responsibilities in the role as superintendent. Race and gender were not used as selection criteria as the goal of this research is to gain the perceived educational preparation experiences of school leadership. Detailed demographic information was collected and analyzed on all participants that represented eight different Career Tech schools in Oklahoma.

## Data Collection

Multiple forms of data were collected for this qualitative case study. The semi-structured, open-ended personal interviews were conducted with each of the participants. The interviews took place in the offices or the real world setting of the superintendents, without researcher interference or manipulation, to allow the natural unfolding of information to be shared during the interviews, (Patton, 2015). Interview questions were e-mailed to the

CTE superintendents three days prior to the mutually agreed interview date, allowing time to process their answers, with the anticipation of gaining more thorough and relevant data during the interview. The face-to-face interviews encouraged the superintendents to reflect on their experiences and opinions as it related to their educational leadership preparation, and allowed unanticipated data to be uncovered through their responses (Patton, 2015).

With respect of the administrators' time, the interviews were set during the normal working day, and intended to last approximately one hour. However, the participants were not rushed, allowing to take as much time as they desired to reflect, answer the questions, and explain their experiences. Additional questions were asked as a follow-up or to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences or to properly understand the meaning of their responses.

An intentional effort to gather as much data as possible during the initial interview, to potentially diminish the necessity to request additional interviewee' time was implemented. During the visit to the selected CTE superintendent's school for the interview, additional time was requested to observe the district leader in their natural setting, as they interacted with school staff and performed their daily job functions. Additionally, artifacts were collected to aid in discovering more information and provide a more in-depth explanation and understanding of a possible correlation of the CTE superintendent's preparation experiences and career success. This included requests for artifacts such as higher education plans-of-study, other relevant preparation records, transcripts, job descriptions, organizational charts, documents highlighting leadership success, or other relics deemed applicable by the interviewee or researcher.

## Data Analysis

At the completion of the interview and data collection process, the data was carefully and strategically organized, processed, and protected. The audibly recorded interviews were transcribed and checked for accuracy. Additional data sources including observations, documents, and artifacts were also recorded, reviewed and analyzed. All data was thoroughly read and reviewed for familiarity. Then, the data was reviewed multiple times and coded for emergent themes. Resulting themes were tested against other data sets. The Three-Skills Approach to leadership development was applied after analysis to apply structure and language for the findings.

## Assumptions and Limitations

While conducting this research, the following assumptions were made that could have affected the quality of the data. The Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (ODCTE) accurately provided the correct information regarding the administrator criteria in order to have the total pool of possible participants to purposefully select. The administrators selected for the study understood all of the questions and truthfully responded with their perceptions of their educational preparation experiences. Lastly, as a research instrument, ensuring that I clearly understood, properly recorded and accurately transcribed the participant responses during the data collection process.

Possible limitations included the number of participants and researcher bias. The administrators in this research all worked in an Oklahoma CTE school during the 2019-2020 school year, which may limit the generalizability of the CTE administrator preparation across the nation. Eight CTE superintendents were chosen, which represented approximately one-fourth of the Oklahoma CTE superintendents. While additional interviewees may have

provided more data, eight was believed to provide an adequate sample and achievable in regard to my time. Additionally, I am also an Oklahoma CTE administrator as well as the primary data collection instrument, therefore unintended researcher bias could be a limitation.

## Significance of the Study

### To Practice

The findings in this study will assist aspiring school administrators, who desire to transition to the role of a Career Tech administrator, to gain the needed knowledge, skills, and competencies through the mandatory preparation experiences. The knowledge and implementation of these findings will hopefully increase the transition and overall success of Career Tech administrators in their leadership role. Research has shown the important role an effective administrator plays in school culture, teacher improvement and ultimately, student success (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Orphanos & Orr, 2014; Radinger, 2014; Thessin & Clayton, 2013; Wallace Foundation, 2013). While positive preparation experiences have been demonstrated by some researchers (Backor & Gordon, 2015; Johnson, 2016; Marzano, Waters, McNulty, 2005), other research has been critical of the preparation of these district educational leaders (Levine, 2005; Phillips, 2013, Robicheau & Haar, 2008; Zirkle & Cotton, 2001). This research will assist leadership preparation programs in their course design and plans-of-study to properly prepare these leaders.

### To Research

Research has identified that effective school leaders must have the knowledge and skills to ensure quality instruction as well as creating a positive school culture (Briggs,

Cheney, Davis, & Moll, 2013; McCarthy, 2015; Reeves & Berry, 2009; Robinson, 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013). However, a gap exists as it relates to the specific preparation components needed by those leaders aspiring to become administrators in a Career Tech school (Clark & Cole, 2015). This research will hopefully add key components to the limited research related to the needed preparation differences between public school administrators and Career Tech administrators as well as why key preparation components are necessary for CTE administrators. This study will add to the limited body of research of the knowledge and skills needed for the preparation experiences for leaders to experience success in the role of a Career Tech administrator.

**To Theory**

Extensive research has been completed in regard to school improvement and especially factors that influence student achievement, teacher success and a positive school culture (Briggs et al., 2013; Leithwood et al., 2004; McCarthy, 2015; Orphanos & Orr, 2014; Reeves & Berry, 2009; Robinson, 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013). This research has added to the body of research and application of the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development, as a model of leadership capacity development for educational leaders. The findings highlight the importance preparation experiences as a component of an individual's career experiences, in their development and success as a leader. The contribution this research makes to the development of this theory will impact the future preparation of Career Tech leadership, as well as the associated school improvement and increased student learning from a properly prepared leader.

## Definition of Terms

*Administrator* – An individual who is responsible for leadership and oversight for either a building level or district level position within a school district. Typically requires either a principal or superintendent licensure.

*CTE* – A commonly used abbreviation for the nationwide system of Career and Technology Education training schools, providing training and skills for college as well as workplace success.

*Career Tech* - The common term in Oklahoma when referring to the various career and technology educational training offered through the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education.

*Educational Leadership Constituent Council* (ELLC) - *Standards and guidelines for the preparation of educational leaders that is governed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration. Consists of both building level and district level standards for administrators.*

*Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium* (ISSLC) – Developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers, comprised of six standards that were designed to strengthen preparation programs in school leadership.

*Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (ODCTE)* – The state funded agency in Oklahoma that is responsible for the oversight of the educational programs offered in the 395 of the public high schools, 29 technology centers and 16 skills centers located within the correctional institutions.

*Preparation* – The variety of training and experiences that are either mandated or encouraged by the state, a college/university or the school district. Can also include the professional development opportunities provided by the school or attended by the educator in an effort to become more effective for their current or future position.

*Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB)* – A non-profit organization based out of Atlanta, Georgia that works with sixteen member states, including Oklahoma, to improve education in both public education as well as career and technical schools.

*Superintendent* – The district leader hired by a school board to have the oversight responsibilities for managing and leading a school district. In Oklahoma, requires a minimum of a Master's degree and passing a state mandated superintendent test.

*Technology Center* – Refers to a regional Career Tech school that provides education and training for high school Junior and Senior students, as well as adults, preparing individuals for college as well as the workplace.

## Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters as identified below. Chapter I provides the introduction to the study and contains the statement of the problem, purpose, research questions, methodology and the theoretical framework. Chapter II consists of a detailed review of existing research related to the role of leadership, preparation requirements and suggested standards for individuals aspiring to become an administrator, and differences that exist within career and technical education. Chapter III details the research methods used and identifies the selection process of participants, as well as how the research data was collected and analyzed. Chapter IV provides a detailed overview of the data that was

collected through the various avenues of personal interviews, observations of participants, and artifacts gathered during the research phase. Chapter V contains a discussion through the lens of the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development; reviews the implications to how this research was significant to practice, research and theory; and provides recommendations based on the research findings

## Summary

The school administrator plays a key role in the overall improvement of the school district and teacher effectiveness which are essential elements to improved student learning and success. The preparation of CTE district leaders is essential to ensure they are properly equipped with the knowledge, skills, and experiences for success in their leadership positions. However, the current "one size fits all" preparation approach was analyzed to determine what differences should exist for individuals aspiring to lead in CTE schools as compared to public education.

# CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of CTE superintendent's educational leadership preparation experiences and how equipped they were for leadership within a Career Tech school in Oklahoma. This review of literature includes an examination of the standards and components of leadership preparation programs believed to be essential for educational leaders, documented strengths and weakness of programs in relation to the leader's preparation for their leadership role, as well as the differences in educational focus, standards, and other dissimilarities that may exist between public education and CTE education.

### Evolution and Standards of Leadership Preparation

The education, training, and licensure requirements for educational leadership roles within schools, whether at the building level as a principal or the district level as a superintendent, has evolved as a result of research, legislation, and increased interest from stakeholders. This section details the evolution of effective leadership preparation along with the monumental legislative actions and reform movements that have resulted in changes in the expectations of schools as well as the professional standards for the preparation of educational leaders.

## Historical Perspective of Preparation

As McCarthy (2015) stated, "An understanding of the past is instructive in strategically planning for the future" (p. 417). The preparation and licensure of educators have evolved as the priority and focus of a formal education has changed from the one-room schoolhouses to the high accountability school systems we have today. The approval of an educator's qualifications within our country can be traced back to the early 1700's where a schoolmaster was required to gain the approval of local ministers (Cole, 1957). However, it was in the late 1830's when schools began having administrative positions, and by the 1900's most schools had an appointed district administrator, although their preparation was through informal training or personal educational experiences (Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2014; Levine, 2005). As education changed, gained importance, and increased in priority within the country, formalized preparation and licensure programs started gaining recognition.

The first formal preparation of educational leaders can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when the first doctoral degrees in educational administration were awarded in 1905 (Levine, 2005; Reeves & Berry, 2008). During the 20th century, the field of educational administration began to formalize and achieve professionalism with formal programs of study eventually being offered at over 500 colleges and universities, and becoming a requirement for school leaders in every state (Kowalski, 2009; Levine, 2005, McCarthy, 2015; Reeves & Berry, 2008). It was reported over 600 educational leadership programs were granting degrees within the United States by 2005 (Levine, 2005).

**Role of Leadership**

The role and need for quality leaders within any organization, group or nation of have been well documented as essential (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015; Clark & Cole, 2105), and as Reeves and Berry (2008) noted, "leadership in school organizations matters-just as it does in most private or public enterprise" (p. 1). Effective leaders in an educational setting are instrumental in improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools by recognizing the connection between student achievement and instructional leadership, therefore creating a challenging and supportive environment that is conducive to student learning (Gray, 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; NPBEA, 2015; Radinger, 2014).

Research has shown the classroom teacher as the most critical component of student learning, with effective educational leaders being the second most important school-related factor within our schools (Leithwood et al., 2004; Orphanos & Orr, 2014; Radinger, 2014; Thessin & Clayton, 2013; Wallace Foundation, 2013). Although the school principal and superintendent may not have direct student instruction responsibilities, they do have the ultimate responsibility of creating a positive and safe school culture where teachers can grow professionally, which will lead to improved teacher learning as well as improved student achievement (Leithwood, Patten, Jantzi, 2010; Sergiovanni, 2005).

Dufour and Marzano (2011) noted, "schools can only be as good as the people within them" (p. 20) and effective school leaders must have the knowledge and skills to assist teachers in the planning and improvement of quality instruction as well as creative

a positive school culture (Briggs et al., 2013; McCarthy, 2015; Reeves & Berry, 2009; Robinson, 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013). Many researchers have labeled educational administrators as leaders of learning due to their direct role in developing effective instructional techniques within their districts. As educational leaders provide the professional development opportunities to build teachers' capacity and improve staff morale, this will in turn directly influence student learning (Levine, 2005; Peck, Reitzug, & West, 2013; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

## Legislative Based Initiatives

**Race to the Top**. As a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, signed into law by President Barack Obama, funding in the amount of $4.35 billion was allocated for the Race to the Top (RTT) that included policies and practices that would lead to improved student outcomes (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Six objectives were tied to the RTT school grant process including (a) improving state capacity to support school improvement efforts; (b) adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace; (c) building state data systems that measure student growth and inform instruction; (d) recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals; (e) turning around low-performing schools; and (f) encouraging conditions in which charter schools can succeed (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. vi). The focus of effective school leadership was evident within the Race to the Top objectives in the administrators' role to improve school and student outcomes as well as the schools' responsibility of being able to recruit, develop, and retain effective school leaders (U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Wallace Foundation, 2013).

**No Child Left Behind**. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, was signed into law in January 2002, by President George W. Bush. (Husband & Hunt, 2015). The intent of this act was increasing the accountability of schools, and specifically improving the quality of public education, increasing student achievement to defined levels and demonstrating adequate yearly progress (Gray, 2009; Husband & Hunt, 2015; Pannell, Peltier-Glaze, Haynes, Davis, & Skelton, 2015). Four key components of NCLB were: (a) stronger accountability, (b) greater flexibility for the use of federal funds, (c) more choices for the parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and (d) emphasis on the use of teaching methods that have been proven to be effective in student success (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Considered to be one of the most significant educational reforms ever enacted within the United States, one major focus of the NCLB Act was specifically to improve student outcomes, yet it resulted in profound influences and expectations on school leadership (Peck et al., 2013; Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012). NCLB redefined the school leader's role with a new set of responsibilities which changed the focus from manager to instructional leader, the need for data-driven decisions, as well as the implementation of research-based programs (Gray, 2009; Husband & Hunt, 2015; Linn, Sherman, & Gill, 2007).

## Educational Standards

**Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning.** Twenty-one leadership responsibilities were identified by the Mid-Continent Research for Education and

Learning (McREL) organization that highlighted the knowledge and skills needed by school leaders to positively impact student achievement (James-Ward & Abuyen, 2015; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2003). The 21 Leadership Responsibilities consist of: affirmation, change agent, contingent rewards, communication, culture, discipline, flexibility, focus, ideals and beliefs, input, intellectual stimulation, involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, knowledge of curriculum, instruction and assessment, monitoring and evaluation, optimizer, order, outreach, relationships, resources, situational awareness, and visibility (James-Ward & Abuyen, 2015). When school leaders take on the role of change agents for their schools, the use of the McREL leadership responsibilities are expected to improve school culture, produce positive student outcomes, and result in second-order change (James-Ward & Abuyen, 2015).

**Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium.** The Council of Chief School Officers (CCSO) commissioned the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in 1994 to develop empirically grounded principles and best practices that could be used in the development of school leaders, which were adopted on November 2, 1996 (Davis, Leon, & Fultz, 2012; Lindahl & Beach, 2009). The goal of the ISLLC standards was to develop and refine a set of standards and requirements that would support the preparation and practice of school administration, leading to school accountability and increased student outcomes (Hemmen, Edmonson, & Slate, 2009; Hyle, Ivory, & McClellan, 2010). The six standards were performance-based and organized into the three domains of knowledge, dispositions, and performances; which contain six conceptual categories with 184 supporting concepts to help the school leader promote the success of students (Hilliard & Jackson, 2011; Lindahl & Beach, 2009).

The 2008 ISLLC standards revision was intended to align closer with the changing needs of educational leadership in the 21st century schools and emphasize democratic leadership (Davis et al., 2012; Machado, 2012). The standards also provided policy makers and scholars guidance in their work to improve the preparation and development of educational leaders (Hemmen et al., 2009; Machado, 2012). The 2008 ISLLC standards were streamlined and utilized performance based language to identify the roles and responsibilities of the school leader, consisting of (a) vision; (b) school culture and instructional program; (c) operations, management, and resources; (c) collaboration with faculty and community; (d) ethics; and (e) political, social, legal, and cultural context (Lindahl & Beach, 2009).

**Professional Standards for Educational Leaders.** In October 2015, a new set of standards, the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) was released to replace the 2008 ISLLC standards. The PSEL is student-centric and designed to be professional guideposts for the preparation and professional growth of school leaders (Murphy, Seashore-Louis, & Smylie, 2017; NPBEA, 2015). They are intended to influence all school leaders including building level, central office, and even school boards by responding to a new perspective of public education through utilizing the most recent research, demonstrating the impact school leaders have on both teaching and student learning (Murphy et al., 2017; NPBEA, 2015).

The 2015 PSEL standards expanded on the 2008 ISLLC standards and include ten standards including: (a) mission, vision, and core values; (b) ethics and professional norms; (c) equity and cultural responsiveness; (d) curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (e) community of care and support for students; (f) professional capacity of

school personnel; (g) professional community for teachers and staff; (h) meaningful engagement of families and communities; (i) operations and management; (j) school improvement (NPBEA, 2015). PSEL standards provided a different lens in which to view school leadership, the important role leaders play in schools each day and acknowledge the world of education is ever changing (Murphy et al., 2017). The revisions associated with the 2015 PSEL standards specifically focused on students and their learning processes and outlined the principles of leadership believed to be essential in the preparation of a well-educated student for career success in the 21st century (NPBEA, 2015, Wallace Foundation, 2013).

**National Educational Leadership Preparation.** Upon the introduction of the ISLLC standards, the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) was tasked with developing standards that could be utilized by university preparation programs to guide the process of the determining what leaders both need to know as well as should be able to do (Young, Anderson, & Nash, 2017). This standardization of curriculum by the ELCC is credited with increasing the similarity of school leadership preparation programs within the United States and having a positive impact on the preparation process as it created common visions for both preparation and practice (Canole & Young, 2013; Young, Anderson, & Nash 2017). With the introduction of the PSEL, new standards were developed that aligned preparation programs to the PSEL along with a name change from ELCC to the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards (Young et al., 2017).

The NELP standards specifically identified the expected performance measures for school administrators, whether at the building or central office level (Young et al.,

2017). The following seven standards will be utilized by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) to evaluate university preparation programs: (a) mission, vision, and core values; (b) ethics and professional norms; (c) equity and cultural leadership; (d) instructional leadership, (e) community and external leadership; (f) operations and management; and (g) human resource leadership (Young et al., 2017).

## Educational Leadership Preparation

School leader preparation has shown to be needed as "a critical component, an essential element, of system education reform" (Peterson et al., 2008, p. 1) which directly influences teacher success and in turn affects student learning. The responsibilities and expectations of school leadership are complex, therefore necessitating the need for effective preparation for school leaders (Hoyle, 2007). This section details how an effective preparation program can meet the need of administrator turnover and possible nationwide shortage, criticisms of preparation programs, positive perceptions of leaders upon completing a university-based program, leader preparation for non-traditional schools and variations in licensure for school leaders.

### Positive Preparation Experiences

While some researchers and educational leaders have perceived the preparation as inadequate, irrelevant, or not applicable, other research has demonstrated positive perceptions regarding the preparation program (Backor & Gordon, 2015; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Johnson, 2016; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). It has been noted the quality of leadership provided and the quality of preparation experiences are directly correlated,

necessitating the need for quality educational leadership programs (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007; Hernandez, Roberts, & Menchaca, 2012). Orr (2007) examined graduate perceptions from three different university programs, one that operated a traditional university-based program and two that implemented a program with a partnership between the university and local school district. Surveys from graduates showed positive perceptions of the programs with supportive program structures, standards-based curriculum and a strong internship element which were all factors in the outcomes of gains in leadership skills and knowledge, their career intentions as well as advancement into leadership positions (Orr & Barber, 2006).

A study by Peterson et al. (2008) of 2,240 novice superintendents from four states (CA, MO, NC, & OH) revealed an overall positive attitude toward their preparation program. The respondents did suggest a more intense focus should be made in the areas of finance, school law and board relations that would be beneficial in their leadership roles, yet perceived their preparation as beneficial to their roles. Orr (2011) examined perceptions of 629 graduates who completed preparation programs from seventeen different universities between 2004 and 2007. The analysis by Orr (2011) revealed highly rated "program quality standards for selection, focus, content, delivery, and somewhat less so in field experience" (p. 154), that most schools provided a "good to strong learning experience" (p. 154), and overall "positive to very positive graduates' learning outcomes" (p. 155) by the graduates.

Barton and Cox (2012) compared pre and post self-assessments of students in an administrative preparation program in California, in which 82 participants were immersed in administrative experiences that reflected what the leaders would soon

experience within a school setting. The study showed positive gains in the student's leadership skills and abilities in their preparation of future educational leadership opportunities. Research has identified the importance of immersing future leaders within real school issues where they can enhance their real-world problem-solving skills before obtaining a position as a principal or superintendent (Barton & Cox, 2012; Perez et al., 2011).

**Criticisms of Educational Leadership Programs**

The relevance and real-world applicability of educational leader preparation, related to the challenges they will face as school administrators, has come under attack for being inadequate and not fully preparing future leaders (Glass, 2006; Levine, 2005; Phillips, 2013; Robicheau & Haar, 2008; Zirkle & Cotton, 2001). Specifically, Levine (2005) stated the programs "offered little in the way of meaningful clinical or field-based experiences" (p. 41) and "collectively, educational administration programs are the weakest of all programs at the nation's schools" (p. 13) making school leaders unprepared for the challenges they were about to undertake. According to Kowalski and Glass (2002), the "dissatisfaction with the academic preparation of superintendents has long existed" (p. 47) but was never closely examined before the 1990's, necessitating the need for a critical examination of the practices and structure of university-based preparation programs. (Clark & Cole, 2015; Cooper, Fusarelli, Jackson, & Poster, 2002; Pannell et al., 2015).

While most university preparation programs have worked to align their courses and curriculum to national standards and meet accreditation requirements, some

researchers still report that little progress has truly occurred in overcoming the program deficits, revising the outdated curriculum, or helping develop the needed competencies for school leaders (Duncan, Range, & Scherz, 2011; Fry et al., 2007; Levine, 2005; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006). Research by Davis et al. (2010) found little coherence between the different university preparation programs as well as between different states.

**Administrator Turnover/Shortage**

Many researchers believe there is and will continue to be a shortage of school leaders that are both certified and qualified for their positions of leadership (Sutton, 2008; White, Hilliard, & Jackson, 2011). Among the national concerns are an aging of the school leadership population, variations in incentives to increase the pool of school leaders, and the overall lack of professional development in the area of school leadership (Sutton, 2008; White et al., 2011). Concerted efforts must be taken by schools to attract and retain high-quality school leaders and for the universities to ensure the pipeline of effectively prepared, future school administrators (McCarthy, 2015; Sutton, 2008; White et al., 2011).

**Internships and Mentoring**

The need for internships that provide rich and meaningful experiences as a part of the preparation process has specifically been a criticism identified as needed for effective administrator preparation (Fry et al., 2007). Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) reported "a sizeable body of research suggest that most adults learn best when exposed to situations requiring the application of acquired skills, knowledge, and problem-solving strategies within authentic settings" (p. 10), emphasizing the importance

and relevance of an internship component in school leadership preparation. Traditional mentoring processes must be re-examined to increase diversity as well as challenge the status-quo expectations for leadership development to properly prepare school leaders (Grogan & Crow, 2004).

**Alternative Licensure**

Changes in the licensure requirements and processes for teachers also can have an impact on the licensure of those individuals who aspire to transition from the classroom to become a school administrator. While alternative teacher licensure may expedite the process of individuals transitioning to education from a previous career, this may prove to shortchange essential preparation components, including a strong pedagogical foundation (Brown, O'Connor, Neal, & Overturf, 2010). Research by Brown et al. (2010) revealed that prospective administrators with alternative licensures could lack the necessary knowledge and experiences as compared to traditionally certified colleagues, which could limit their success as an educational leader.

**Non-Traditional School Leader Preparation**

Administrators working within non-traditional educational institutions, other than a public-school setting, have typically been trained in the same traditional preparation programs and have not received specific training that is needed to be successful and lead effectively in these settings (Price et al., 2010). According to Price, Martin and Robertson, (2010), "there are no programs nationwide that train leaders to lead in correctional education or alternative schools" and these individuals "require specific, targeted training and support that may be inherently different from what is currently

available to them in traditional higher education preparation programs" (p. 300). A new model is suggested for the preparation of leaders in non-traditional educational settings to effectively lead staff members and engage at-risk students to develop, grow and achieve, is needed to provide the same quality education for students (Price et al., 2010).

**School Administrator Licensure**

Just as differences exist between the preparation programs for educational leaders, differences also exist as it relates to the licensure. Davis et al. (2010) reported the significance of professional licensure in assuring the general public that an individual has quality, integrity, and highly skilled. Three identified purposes of licensure include: (a) expected knowledge, skills, and abilities, (b) an assurance to others that the individual will not harm the recipient through their practice, and (c) and it symbolizes the accomplishment of completing a formal preparation program and passed required assessments (Davis et al., 2010). In 2010, only 52% of states required a master's degree as a condition of becoming licensed as a school administrator, and 42% of states require both an approved plan of study from a university preparation program and that individuals to pass an administrator competency exam (Davis et al., 2010). Research by Davis et al. (2010) demonstrated that 36% of states require a single license for site-based administrative positions and 30% of states, including Oklahoma, require a principal endorsement, and 24% of states, including Oklahoma, require both a position and school level endorsements. As it relates to Superintendent positions, leaders in 68% of the states are required to have a special license or credential endorsement (Davis et al., 2010).

## Career Tech Leader Preparation Differences

The structure, expected educational outcomes, stakeholder involvement and student audience, is different from both K12 public education and post-secondary education. Career and technical education have been challenged to meet the demands of both the workforce and post-secondary requirements, with the ultimate goal of preparing individuals for a rapidly changing world of work and unknown future changes within their career field (Stringfield & Stone, 2017). This section outlines some of these differences, which are imperative for educators as they prepare for a leadership role within CTE education.

### CTE Legislation

Over the course of the past century, a legislative focus on career and technical education has been evident through the passage and funding of numerous legislative actions. Initial support can be traced back to the Morrill Act of 1862, initiating vocational education at the collegiate level, followed by the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 where a formalized secondary vocational education system was implemented (Imperatore & Hyslop, 2017; Stringfield & Stone, 2017; Zirkle & Jeffery, 2017). More recently, the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 reflected a continued government focus on school accountability in preparing students for the workplace through occupationally focused coursework, the integration of academic and technical education courses, and bridging between secondary and post-secondary education (Bozick & Dalton, 2013; Imperatore & Hyslop, 2017; Martinez, 2007). Additionally, this act emphasized the importance of CTE educators to have up-to-date and industry relevant

technical knowledge and skills in order to effectively prepare students for entry to the workforce, which requires the CTE administrators to examine the professional development activities for their schools (Clark & Cole, 2015; Stephens, 2011).

## CTE Educational Programs

Career and technical education spans across many different institutions and age groups including traditional secondary schools, magnet schools, designated CTE centers, technical colleges, community colleges, workforce education, and reformatory institutions (Jacques & Potemski, 2014; Mitchell, 2017; Rojewski, Asunda, & Kim, 2008; Rojewksi & Hill, 2014). Additionally, CTE plays an integral part of workforce, business, and economic development within the local communities and across each state (Clark & Cole, 2015). The taxonomy of the CTE audience ranges from students at the secondary level to young adults on postsecondary levels, as well as multiple generations of adults desiring updated workforce training and employable skill development for the incarcerated (Jacques & Potemski, 2014; Rojewski & Hill, 2014; Tolbert, Foster, DeMichele, & Cataylo, 2016, Ward, 2009). CTE courses can provide industry recognized certifications, credit toward secondary and post-secondary degrees, and knowledge and skills specifically designed for future employment (Clark & Cole, 2105; Mitchell, 2017).

A challenge that CTE administrators face as they work with teachers and staff is the critical importance of continually updating the curriculum for all courses to ensure the instruction reflects the needs and expectations of the employers and workforce needs (Rojewski & Hill, 2014). This requires administrators at CTE schools to stay abreast of

the current and future trends in business and industry and they challenge instructors to keep programs aligned with college and the workforce (Clark & Cole, 2015; Viviano, 2012). Stone (2017) posited the signature features of CTE programs should include curriculum (a) that mirrors the industry standards and desired qualifications; (b) contain real-world scenarios and tasks; (c) integrates math, literacy, and science concepts; and (d) involve community-based learning.

**CTE Standards**

As Viviano (2012) noted, it is important for CTE administrators to fully understand what is expected from CTE teachers in order to fully "mentor, evaluate, coach and professionally develop all teachers" (p. 53). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards lists ten standards that are specifically important for CTE educators, including (a) knowledge of students, (b) responding to diversity, (c) knowledge of content, (d) learning environments and instructional practices, (e) assessment, (f) postsecondary readiness, (g) program design and management, (h) partnerships and collaborations, (i) leadership in the profession, and (j) reflective practice.

Secondary CTE courses are divided into sixteen career clusters which are further segmented into 79 pathways (ACTE, 2018). The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) has established a framework for high-quality CTE programs of study, used to evaluate the effectiveness and determine areas for improvement. This framework includes the 12 essential elements of (a) standards-aligned and integrated curriculum, (b) sequencing and articulation, (c) student assessment, (d) prepared and effective program staff, (e) engaging instructional strategies, (f) access and equity, (g) facilities and

equipment, (h) business and community partnerships, (i) career development, (j) career technical student organizations, (k) work-based learning, and (l) data and outcomes (ACTE, 2018).

## CTE Educator Preparation

Extensive research has been conducted regarding the development and preparation of CTE teachers and the essential components in developing quality educators (Adams, 2010). According to the Southern Regional Education Board (n.d.), "almost 75 percent of new career/technical (CT) teachers arrive in classrooms with little or no training for how to plan instruction, teach, use assessments for student learning or manage classrooms" (p. 2). While some CTE teachers originate from traditional teacher preparation programs or switch from a public education environment, other CTE educators have transitioned from industry due to their desire to teach their trade or field of specialty (Backes & Burns, 2008; O'Connor, 2012; Szuminski, 2003).

The alternative certified CTE teachers face the similar challenges and obstacles as their public education counterparts, requiring CTE administrators to provide the professional development needed during their induction years (Cannon, Kitchel, & Tenuto, 2013). Along with the skills and knowledge needed by all effective teachers, CTE teachers have additional expectations which include maintaining an advisory committee comprised of business professionals, supervising Career and Technical Student Organizations, managing programs budgets as well as community involvement activities (Cannon et al., 2013; Kitchen, Arnett, Cannon, & Duncan, 2010). Research by Clark and Cole (2015) involving 26 state CTE directors, revealed a belief that different

skills and abilities are required by CTE leaders who supervise teachers transitioning from industry as compared to academic teachers with formal college training. Therefore, CTE administrators must be knowledgeable of the challenges faced by any alternative certified teachers and be prepared to assist in the transition from industry to education (Clark & Cole, 2015).

## CTE Educator Shortage

Regardless of whether CTE teachers were alternative certified or have a four-year education degree, CTE has also faced difficulty in maintaining a supply of qualified and prepared individuals desiring to teach, which has contributed to a teacher shortage problem (Fletcher & Gordon, 2017; McCandless & Sauer, 2010). Similarly, Wilkin and Nwoke (2011) noted the increasing number of CTE teachers approaching retirement is also making the CTE teacher shortage a significant problem. A major factor cited in teacher retention include the CTE administrator's support as well as professional involvement with new teachers, and they become acclimated to their role as an educator (McCandless & Sauer, 2010; Sanford & Self, 2011; Wilkin & Nwoke, 2011). Zirkle and Cotton (2001) posited that since the primary source of future CTE administrators is derived from the CTE teachers, if a shortage exists of CTE teachers then there will likely be a shortage of administrators in the coming years.

## CTE Administrators

One of the earliest research studies related to CTE administrators was by Edmunds (1967) in the state of Utah which revealed that administrators supervising CTE programs should hold a master's degree, have academic preparation in one of the

vocational subject areas, plus completed hours in school administration. Some respondents also indicated the importance of a minimum of three years' industrial work experience for school administrators to better understand the demands of the workplace (Edmunds, 1967). Zirkle and Cotton (2001) noted the integration of career and technical education courses with academic disciplines increased the administrator preparation requirements to include more academic disciplines. Research has noted a dramatic decline in recent years in regard to administrators obtaining a doctorate degree in technical education as well as the number of school administration programs that are preparing the next generation of CTE educational leaders, which may lead to a continued crisis in CTE education (Baltzer, Lazaros, & Flowers, 2007; Zirkle, 2002; Zirkle & Cotton, 2001).

While many may consider the job expectations and working environment for administrators of public school and Career Tech schools to be the same, numerous differences have been noted. CTE administrators interact closely with business and industry, Workforce Investment Boards, and post-secondary institutions to provide relevant and recognized education courses (Clark & Cole, 2015). Additionally, differences exist in the vision and cultures of CTE schools, the integration of academics and CTE standards, training agreements with business and industry, adult education programs, and differences in funding and financing practices (Clark & Cole, 2015; Zirkle & Cotton, 2001). Individuals desiring to become an administrator at a CTE school should develop the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities, as well as the awareness of the CTE goals and objectives, if they wish to become effective CTE leaders (Clark & Cole, 2015; Zirkle & Cotton, 2001).

While the exact preparation needs of CTE leaders have not been specifically identified, the research by Zirkle, Parker, and McCaslin (2006) posited that CTE leaders require a knowledge base that is beyond the standards identified by the ISSLC. Research by Clark and Cole (2015) also noted the need for CTE leaders to have additional education and experiential base that is required for a standard principal certification. A need for additional research into the educational preparation requirements of CTE leaders has been identified in order to maintain the quality programming needed through CTE (Clark & Cole, 2015).

## Oklahoma Technology Center Administrator Credential

The Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (ODCTE) requires administrators working at one of the 29 technology centers to hold a Technology Center Administrator Credential in order to supervise ODCTE programs or to evaluate certified faculty (ODCTE, 2018). Requirements for a standard administrator credential include: (a) a secondary principal or superintendent certificate issued by the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE); (b) five years' experience as either teaching or supervising an approved ODCTE program; and (c) a valid Oklahoma CareerTech Teaching Certificate (ODCTE, 2018). However, individuals can receive a five-year provisional credential if they hold a valid administrator's certificate and meet one of the following requirements: (a) three years teaching an ODCTE program, (b) three years as administrator over an ODCTE program, (c) three years working in a technology center and a letter from the current superintendent, or (d) three years' experience at the ODCTE and a letter from the current ODCTE state director (ODCTE, 2018). Administrators with

a provisional credential must then complete either designated college coursework or complete documented professional development hours within five years (ODCTE, 2018).

## Theoretical Framework

Research has indicated the need for relevant and applicable preparation for future educational leaders, which comes through the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities, proven to be essential for career success. Differences exist between the structure, standards, expected educational outcomes, student populations, and community expectations between public school and CTE centers. Therefore, these differences and perceived preparation requirements for CTE administrators was examined through the theoretical framework lens of the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development.

Originating as a leadership skills approach, in 1955 Robert Katz examined leadership as a set of developable skills as opposed to the innate traits that an individual was born to possess (Katz, 1974; Rowe & Guerro, 2013). The Three-Skills Model to leadership development focuses on the premise that skills and abilities can be developed or learned by a leader over a period of time (Katz, 1974; Northouse, 2010; Rowe & Guerro, 2013). While Katz did not discount the role the individual's personality plays in the overall effectiveness of a leader, the three primary skills including technical, human, and conceptual skills were identified as critical for their professional success and comprise the Three-Skill Approach to leadership development (Katz, 1955).

The three skills have significance to all leaders, yet "the relative importance of the three skills varies with the level of administrative responsibility" (Katz, 1955, p. 34). The technical skills, which "involves specialized knowledge, analytical ability within that

specialty, and facility" (Katz, 1955, p. 34) are important for those leaders entering into their first administration and supervisory role. The need for a thorough understanding of the daily operations of the division are essential for the leader's success. However, as individual's transfer from an entry or supervisory role to senior leadership, the need for the technical skills begin to diminish but continue to serve as an essential skill throughout leadership positions.

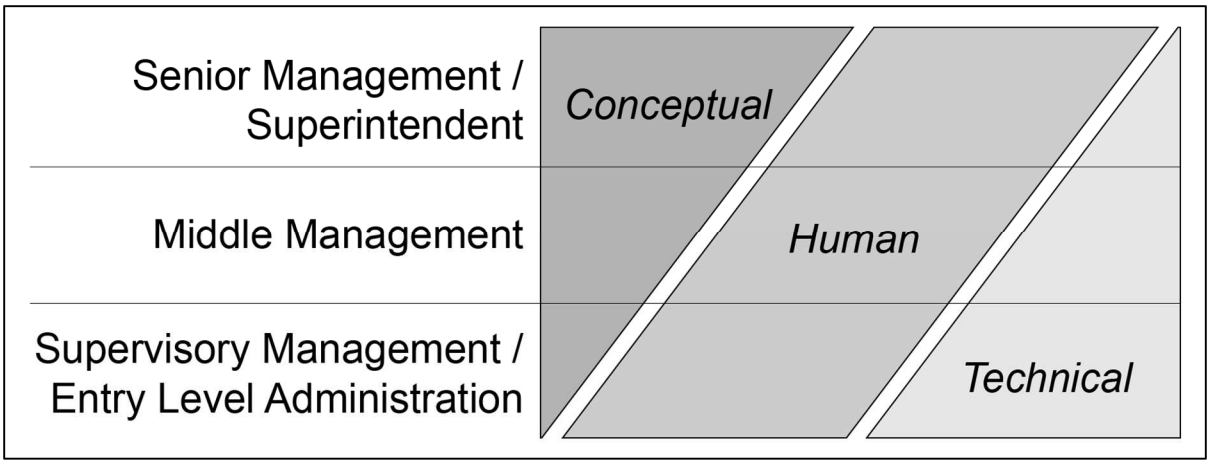
The human skills component is the individual's ability to understand the needs of others, being able to effectively communicate, and have the capacity to unite the people to accomplish the goals of the division or organization (Katz, 1955). "Human skills allow a leader to assist group members in working cooperatively as a group to achieve common goals" (Northouse, 2010). This skill is critical for all levels of leadership, but involves a larger group of people as leaders rise in administrative ranks. Initially this may include influencing a few people in a division, but as a senior leader, or CTE Superintendent, this involves the entire school district including students, parents, and patrons.

The conceptual skills enable a leader to see the big picture and the ability understand the impact or influences of both in internal and external forces. "At the top, conceptual skill becomes the most important of all for successful administration" (Katz, 1955, p. 42). The senior leader's conceptual skills will enable him/her to understand the strengths and challenges of the organization and to creatively develop solutions needed to realize success for the organization. For effective conceptual skills, a leader must also have a foundation of technical skills to utilize in decision making as well strong human skills in order to successfully lead.

The following illustration helps depict the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development. While all three skills are needed by leaders at all level of an organization, as the leadership role changes from an entry or supervisory level to the senior or superintendent position, these skills adjust in importance.

Figure 2

Three-Skills Approach to Leadership Development




SOURCE: Adapted from "Skills of an Effective Administrator," by R. L. Katz, 1955, Harvard Business Review, 33(1), p. 33-42.

The Three-Skills Model of leadership development was chosen to study the leadership preparation of Career Tech administrators due to the applicability of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that have been found to be important for effective leadership. This model provided a lens in which to research the perceived preparation of administrators and helped determine the knowledge and acquired skills and abilities that are needed for effective leadership in a Career Tech school. Since the Three-Skills Approach is based on the premise of leadership is not just a trait, but can be developed or improved through experiences, activities, and interactions, this assisted in identifying the needed components that should be specifically included in the preparation of future Career Tech administrators.

## Summary

Research has shown extensive research related to the preparation and licensure requirements for educational leaders. Effective leadership is essential for schools to meet the expectations and requirements place on them by legislation, standards, and stakeholders. School administrators directly influence teacher efficacy and promote a positive school environment, which in turn will improve student learning and outcomes.

Differences have been shown to exist in the purpose and expectations of career and technical education as compared to traditional public schools as well as the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the administrators for both school settings. However, the current preparation requirements may not be adequately preparing these leaders as they embark on their role as an administrator at a CTE school. This research examined the perceived educational preparation needs of CTE leaders to enable effective and successful leadership for CTE schools and faculty, leading to increasing student success.

# CHAPTER III

## METHODOLOGY

As Creswell (2014) noted, qualitative case study research "involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data" (p. 4). As I embarked on the journey to conduct this qualitative research study, with the expectation to add to the body of research related to Career Tech education, it was imperative to develop a thorough plan for gathering accurate data and communicating findings. "Generating meaningful and that useful qualitative findings through observation, interviewing, and content analysis requires discipline, knowledge, training, practice, creativity, and hard work" (Patton, 2015, p. 15), which will be evident throughout the methodology that is outlined in Chapter 3.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case stud y was to explore the perceptions, through the lens of the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development (Katz, 1955), of CTE Superintendents related to how their educational leadership preparation program prepared

them for leadership in Career and Technology Education.

## Research Questions

1.) How do CTE Superintendents describe their educational leadership preparation experiences?

2.) How do CTE Superintendents perceive the utility of skills learned in their preparation programs?

3.) What knowledge or skills do CTE Superintendents identify as important to the preparation of aspiring CTE leaders?

4.) What technical, human, and conceptual skills, as represented in the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development, do CTE Superintendents perceive are necessary for leadership in the CTE setting?

## Research Design

The epistemological perspective guiding this qualitative case study was constructivism. According to Creswell (2014), "social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" and therefore "individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences" (p. 8). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted "reality is socially constructed" and "there are multiple realities, or interpretations, or a single event" (p. 9). This study examined the perceptions or meanings applied by Career Tech superintendents to their preparation experiences for their positions of leadership.

To accomplish the purpose of this research study, a qualitative research method allowed for what Creswell (2014) described as "exploring and understanding the meaning

individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4) or as Patton (2015) stated "illuminating meanings and how humans engage in meaning making – in essence, making sense of the world" (p. 6). The various qualitative data collection methods allowed to "facilitate study of issues in depth and detail" (Patton, 2015, p. 22) in order to gain superintendents' experiences, opinions, and suggestions that would be difficult to achieve though quantitative methodology, as it would not allow for the individual's perceptions to be clearly communicated in their own words.

The design of inquiry, a case study, was describe by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 37) that will allow for an "analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted the following in regard to a case study, "The single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of the study: the case" and "the unit of analysis, not the topic of investigation, characterizes a case study" (p. 38).

## Methodological Procedures

Qualitative research strategies allow for multiple sources of data to be collected. For this research, transcribed interviews of CTE superintendents were the main data source. Other methods of data collection included personal observations as well as the collection of documents and artifacts which were used to triangulate to ensure consistency, reliability and accuracy of the data.

Approval for this research study began with the dissertation committee members' review and endorsement of the study followed by the formal approval of the Oklahoma

State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Through purposeful and criterion sampling, eight Oklahoma CTE superintendents were selected, and written approval was requested from each participant prior to initiating the research. A copy of the consent form is located in the appendices.

**Population and Sampling**

Twenty-nine CTE centers serve the educational and training needs of Oklahomans, with each site having a superintendent that is responsible for leadership and oversight. Eight of the 29 superintendents were selected through purposeful sampling to gain different perceptions of educational leadership preparation experiences. Creswell (2014) noted, "The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites (or documents or visual material) that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question" (p. 189). The superintendent for the CTE district where I am currently employed, was removed to further prevent any researcher preconception or bias. The eight superintendents were chosen based on the expectation of gaining "in-depth understanding" from "information-rich cases for in-depth study" (Patton, 2015, p. 264).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted, "Sample selection in qualitative research is usually…nonrandom, purposeful, and small" (p. 18). Therefore, criterion sampling was utilized to identify the eight superintendents and sites that would be asked to participate in the study. The selection of participants included superintendents with years of experience ranging from one to ten years, different sizes of schools based on district size

and ad valorem base, locations representing all areas of the state, and individuals with a master's or doctoral degree.

The criteria for the selections was initially be based on selecting four CTE Superintendents who had three or less years of experience in the role of a CTE Superintendent, and four CTE Superintendents with more than three years, but less than ten years. The criteria were established based on selecting four leaders who are still in their introductory years as the district CTE leader, and also four superintendents who have been in their role for less than ten years. The expectation was that this group of eight CTE Superintendents encountered similar preparation requirements, but were in different levels of mastery in their role of senior leadership.

Once a list had been established of individuals meeting the initial criteria, other demographics were examined to help ensure the group of participants selected to interview would provide data to help fully understand the research study. These factors included the size of the school, school location within the state to include rural and urban districts. Additionally, demographics associated with the individual leaders, such as the highest degree earned to include both a masters and doctorate degrees, was examined as a part of the selection.

**Data Collection**

Data for this research study was collected "at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study" (Creswell, 2014, p. 185) which is in the Career Tech school setting for each of the superintendents. Creswell (2014) and Patton (2015) both noted the importance of in-depth, open-ended interviews of the participants,

directly observing their behaviors, and examining various written forms of communication or documents for qualitative research. The importance of the data collection instrument was also addressed by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) to be "sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data" (p. 2) Throughout the data collection process, I was mindful of Creswell's (2014) advise to a researcher to "be cognizant of their impact and minimize their disruption of the physical setting" and leaving the site "undisturbed after a research study" (p. 97).

**Interviews.** Arrangements were made to conduct personal interviews with each of the participants, in the natural setting of their offices. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, "The investigator in qualitative research often spends a substantial amount of time in the natural setting…of the study, often in intense contact with the participants" (p. 18) because "the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection" (p. 27). One of the advantages of qualitative research is "talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context" (Creswell, 2014, p. 185).

Leading up to the interview date, a reminder e-mail was sent three days prior to include the list of pre-determined, open-ended questions for the participant to review, as listed in Appendix A. The day before the interview, I personally called to verify their availability and confirm their schedule still allows sufficient time for the interview. As Patton (2015) stated, "The major way in which qualitative researchers seek to understand the perceptions, feelings, experiences and knowledge of people is through in-depth intensive interviewing" (p. 27). I wanted to ensure the time spent interviewing would be productive, which required the participants to not feel rushed or distracted.

The interviews were conducted in the superintendent's office or conference room and audio-taped to allow myself to be focused on the participants and their responses. Because I am acquainted with each of the superintendents from previous interactions, the interviews mirrored Yin's (2018) example of resembling "guided conversations rather than structured questions" (p. 118). The planned list of questions was intentionally unstructured, broad, and general in the design, "so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation" (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Multiple follow-up questions were asked that relate to their initial responses in an effort to elicit more detailed information, gain a deeper understanding of their meaning, and to decrease any misrepresentations. "The key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participant's perspectives, not the researcher's" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16).

The audio-taped interviews were transcribed within one week of the interview, and a copy of the narratives and notes was offered electronically to the participants if they desired to verify the accuracy and eliminate misconstructions. Every opportunity to have verbal and written communication with each participant allows additional opportunities for clarifications, changes to statements, or participant withdrawal from the research without any consequences.

**Observations.** Throughout the data collection process, observations were conducted while on-site for the personal interviews, document collection, or attending campus activities. Patton (2015) stated, "To understand fully the complexities of a situation, direct participation in and observation of the phenomenon of interest is a particularly fruitful method" (p. 27). Therefore, I spent time observing the leaders in

their natural working environment to include such activities as district meetings, touring the campus, and as they interact with district staff members.

On-site visits allowed observations of each Superintendent in their normal working environment, as they performed their professional tasks and interacted with district employees. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, "Informal interviews and conversations are often interwoven with observation" as "observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest" (p. 137). Detailed field notes were kept in a written journal throughout the on-site observations because "the observer's notes become the eyes, ears, and perceptual senses for the reader" (Patton, 2015, p. 28). The notes and a reflection of the observations were typed upon the completion of each observation to fully capture the details of the experiences.

**Documents.** Merriam and Tisdell (2016) detailed the importance of documents in qualitative research by stating, "Data in the form of quotes from documents, field notes, and participant interviews, excerpts from videotapes, electronic communication, or a combination of these are always included in support of the findings of the study" (p. 18). One primary document collected and used during the course of this study was the ELCC standards which are the foundational objectives in educational leadership programs in the State of Oklahoma. Different types of documents including newsletters or memos from the superintendents in written and electronic formats, district profiles and information on the school's website, leadership team meeting agendas, social media posts and miscellaneous handouts available in the reception areas was also collected and examined. Additionally, artifacts such as higher education plans-of-study, degree program sheets, organizational charts, job descriptions and requirements, other documents that highlight

leadership success was requested and examined. According Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "The researcher must keep an open mind when it comes to discovering useful documents" because "data collection is guided by questions, educated hunches, and emerging findings" (p. 175).

Creswell (2014) also emphasized the importance of documents in data collection process to include "obtain(ing) the language and words of participants," being an "unobtrusive source of information," data "that participants have given attention," and "saves a researcher the time and expense of transcribing" (p. 191-192). Website and electronic documents were reviewed prior to the interviews to gain a better perspective of the school and superintendents, while the documents gathered on-site were analyzed upon return from the interviews. Possible limitations associated with the documents as a data source could have included the documents being inaccurate or a misrepresentation of their meaning based on my perception.

**Data Analysis**

Creswell (2014) summarized the role of data analysis within a research study by stating, "In general, the intent is to make sense out of the text and image data. It involves segmenting and taking apart the data…as well as putting it back together" (p. 194-195). The constant comparative method, as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences" (p. 32).

I was intentional as I began unpacking the various data sources to ensure it was never misconstrued or misrepresented. Three suggestions provided by Creswell (2014)

include remaining neutral and not "taking sides" with the participants; reporting both the positive and negative results, which includes not withholding any results or to "cast the results in a favorable light;" and "protect the anonymity of individuals, roles, and incidents" (p. 99). The specific plans for the analysis of the data will be described in-depth in the following sections.

**Organize, prepare and read data.** Upon completion of the data collection process, the interviews were carefully transcribed, providing another opportunity to hear the conversations and reflect on any misunderstood phrases or comments. The handwritten journal of field notes was organized and typed, and all other documents were scanned in order to have an electronic copy. "Phenomenological reduction is the process of continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure or meaning in and of itself" in which "every perception is granted equal value" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 27)

Creswell (2014) noted the importance of the researcher to "review all the data, make sense of it, and organize it into categories or themes that cut across all the data sources" (p. 186). All documents were organized in folders according to each interview, both paper and electronic format. The process of organizing and preparing the data afforded an additional opportunity to read through the data to ensure I understood and properly represented each participant's perspective.

**Code data.** Upon organizing the data, I began coding the information. Creswell (2014) suggested coding data according to three different categories consisting of "topics that readers would expect to find," "codes that are surprising," and "codes that are

unusual, and that are, in and of themselves, of conceptual interest to readers" (p. 198-199). As I read through the interviews and documents, I highlighted information and began making notes in the side margins that summarized the content in a few words. Once this process was complete, I started grouping the information electronically in a Word document, to allow information to be rearranged as necessary to determine themes.

**Generate themes.** Following the coding of the data, I separated and organized the data into broad categories and continued refining until common themes began to emerge. Both Creswell (2014) and Patton (2015) noted the importance of determining common patterns, categories, or themes which will be necessary in the interpretation of the data.

**Convey findings and interpret meanings.** At the completion of the data analysis processes, findings discovered were communicated in narrative format as well as charts depicting the findings. Details related to the participants, the timeline of events and a description of the themes that emerge were thoroughly communicated. As Patton (2015) stated, "the quality of the insights generated is what matters, not the number of such insights" (p. 16). The focus was to conduct, document and communicate a quality study, regardless of the expansiveness of findings

## Researcher Role

### Researcher Bias

As Creswell (2014) noted, "Researchers recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences"

(p. 8). My educational and professional background within Career Tech education must be considered as I take upon the role of a researcher. Upon graduation from high school, I began my pursuit to become an educator by attending Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, where I obtained my Agricultural Education bachelor's degree in 1996. For the next four years, I taught in two different rural schools within Oklahoma, where my position received funding from Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (ODCTE).

In 2000, I began my transition to school administration when I embarked on the journey of a master's degree in Educational Leadership while working at Meridian Technology Center in Stillwater, as the Coordinator of Adult Education and later the Director of Operations. The past sixteen years have been spent as a Director of Operations, Director of Instruction, and Assistant Superintendent at Eastern Oklahoma County Technology Center in Choctaw, OK. I have had responsibilities for supervising instructors, campus planning and improvement as well as overall campus operations. Currently, I operate within the role of Assistant Superintendent with district responsibilities of supervision, budgeting, planning, and long-term growth.

My 24-year career in education has had a CTE focus, with all the administrative experiences within an Oklahoma Career Tech school. Currently, as a doctoral student in Educational Leadership, I have also experienced many of the same preparation experiences as the participants in this research study. Therefore, I understand the biases that could influence my interpretation of the data and the importance of not guiding or leading the participants during the interview process.

## Ethical Considerations

Throughout the data collection, analysis and interpretation phases, it is essential to employ ethical considerations to ensure both trustworthiness and credibility of the data.

**Data collection ethics.** Ethical standards were in place throughout the data collection phase to ensure validity of data and protect the interests and rights of the participants. Prior to beginning the research, the participant informed consent form was developed for their review and signature, providing an assurance to the participants that I would ensure their rights were protected throughout the data collection process. The study gained approval from the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by completing the required forms. An e-mail was sent to the superintendents of the eight technology centers, that wee purposefully selected, asking for their written permission to participate in the research study. Selection and confirmation of interview dates was then communicated with the superintendents to determine a date and time that worked best for their schedule to limit any unnecessary disruptions. Throughout the interview and data collection process, I continually strived to follow the prescribed interview protocol procedures to maintain neutrality and not lead the participants in their answers. Finally, a copy of the interview transcript, findings, or a final copy of the research study was offered to the participants to help ensure mutual benefit between myself and the superintendents.

**Data analysis and interpretation ethics.** A proactive stance was also employed by the researcher to maintain ethical standards in the analysis and interpretation of the research data. Pseudonyms were assigned and used for any identifying factors including

the names of the participants, the Career Tech district name, and location such as city or area of the state to ensure complete anonymity. Security measures were in place to keep the interview data, documents, journal notes, and other information in a continually secure location, whether they were in my possession, in a locked cabinet, or on a password protected computer. Strategies of validation were employed to check the accuracy of the data through participant checking to limit the misrepresentation of meanings that were assigned to the interviews or documents gathered (Creswell, 2014). Lastly, I was consciously aware of the caution to prevent "suppressing, falsifying, or inventing findings" (Creswell, 2014, p. 99) in order to meet the needs of the research.

## Trustworthiness of Findings

This study followed the trustworthiness guidelines as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to include credibility, transferability, as well as dependability and confirmability.

### Credibility

Credibility of this research study was established through multiple techniques including prolonged engagement, persistent observations, peer debriefing, member checks and triangulation. Prolonged engagement while interviewing and gathering documents provided opportunities to build further trust and rapport between myself and the participants, leading to more accurate data. Persistent observations provided opportunities to ensure in-depth data was gathered and to better understand the leadership skills and perspective of the superintendents. Sharing the data gathered with other cohort members of the doctorate program and colleagues for their review and perspective

provided opportunities for peer debriefing. To ensure the data was correctly represented, the research participants were offered copies of all gathered data, including the transcript from the interviews, which established credibility through the member checking.

Triangulation of data was accomplished through conducting multiple interviews and collecting various sources of documentation which was used to develop an accurate perspective of the phenomenon which was used "to build a coherent justification of themes" (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, "Probably the best-known strategy to shore up the internal validity of a study is what is known as triangulation" (p. 244). The intentional efforts to collect multiple sources of relevant and accurate data developed credibility with the research findings and allowed for "cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives of from follow-up interviews" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 245).

**Transferability**

The demonstration of transferability within a naturalistic study is the responsibility of those who attempt to apply it to the receiving context (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Two strategies recommended by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993) to facilitate transferability include using a thick description and purposive sampling. At the onset of the research, the purposive sampling of the selected school sites and superintendents included attempting to "maximize the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about the context" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 33). I collected

precise detail to provide a thick description of the setting, participants, context, design of the research and findings so a reader can determine the application of this research.

**Dependability and Confirmability**

The establishment of trustworthiness through dependability is based on the replicability of the study within a similar context and participants, which is dependent on the reliability of the data (Erlandson et al., 1993). Confirmability is based on whether the findings of the research are clearly a focus of the inquiry, without influence from the researcher. Both dependability and confirmability are verified through an audit. I maintained all journal notes, collected documents, original audio recordings of the interviews, interview transcriptions, and observations notes to freely allow an audit of the entire research process. Considering the acknowledged researcher biases, I attempted to be fully transparent and fully represent the true meanings of the findings.

Table 1

*Trustworthiness Tables*

| **Credibility** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Technique | Results | Examples |
| Prolonged engagement | • Trust building<br>• Rapport development<br>• Relationships built<br>• Obtain accurate data | Extensive time spent conducting interviews, interacting with participants, gathering multiple sources of data, and following up to verify accuracy of data. |
| Persistent Observation | • Obtain in-depth data<br>• Obtain accurate data<br>• Sort relevancies & irrelevancies | Observing participants during site visit while interviewing, during meetings, touring the school, while interacting with staff and other opportunities. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Triangulation | • Data verified | Utilized a variety of documents and artifacts that were collected on-site and through digital resources. |
| Peer Debriefing | • Different perspectives<br>• Alternative ideas | Discussed feedback with other colleagues. |
| Member checking | • Verify accuracy of data<br>• Validate conclusions | Transcripts and findings were offered to all interviewees. |
| Purposive Sampling | • Select sites that will provide potentially differing perspectives. | Purposefully selected sites and superintendents for data collection. |

**Transferability**

| Technique | Results | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Referential adequacy | • Comprehensive perspective of perceptions | Information from school websites, newsletters, social media posts, and written district communication. |
| Thick description | • Vicarious experience for reader | Details regarding preparation experiences, challenges and successes of the leaders, observations of the administrators in their natural setting. |
| Purposive sampling | • Maximize relevant data obtained and maintain focus of study | The participants had varying backgrounds and notable differences, adding credibility to the data. |

**Dependability and Confirmability**

| Technique | Results | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Access to audit trail | • Provide auditor opportunity verify trustworthiness | Journal notes, interview transcripts, e-mail messages, collected documents, peer debriefing and member check notes were kept. |

## Limitations of Study

"In qualitative research, a single case or a small, nonrandom, purposeful sample is selected precisely because the researcher wished to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 254). While I attempted to purposefully select multiple participants that would provide an accurate perspective of their preparation experiences and correctly represent the data, this may not be generalizable to perceptions of all Career Tech Superintendents in Oklahoma or other states. As previously stated, while intentionally preventing any biases based on my experiences working within the Career Tech system and knowing all the participants, this could still be considered to be a limitation of the study.

## Conclusion

Chapter Three provided an outline of the intended methodology and procedures to be utilized for this research study. As Patton (2015) noted, qualitative case studying allows the researcher to get "inside the phenomenon of interest to get detailed, descriptive data and perceptions about the variations in what goes on and the implications of those variations for the people and processes involved" (p. 6). The data was gathered and analyzed through valid and credible techniques to establish the trustworthiness of the findings.

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# CHAPTER IV

## FINDINGS

To achieve the purpose of this qualitative case study, which was to explore the perceptions of CTE Superintendents related to how their educational leadership preparation program equipped them for leadership in a Career Tech school, a qualitative case study methodology was selected. The four major research questions for this study include:

- *Research Question 1: How do CTE Superintendents describe their educational leadership preparation experiences?*
- *Research Question 2: How do CTE Superintendents perceive the utility of skills learned in their preparation programs?*
- *Research Question 3: What knowledge or skills do CTE Superintendents identify as important to the preparation of aspiring CTE leaders?*
- *Research Question 4: What technical, human, and conceptual skills, as represented in the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development, do CTE Superintendents perceive are necessary for leadership in the CTE setting?*

Through on-site interviews with each participant, observation of the leaders in their work environment, and collecting a variety of artifacts, I was able to meet the goals of this research. Additionally, the core knowledge as well as the technical, human, and conceptual skills identified as important to the success of aspiring CTE leaders were revealed through the data analysis.

## Population

The state of Oklahoma has twenty-nine technology centers, with fifty-eight campuses, located across the state to assist in the CTE training for high school students, adults, as well as for business and industry growth and development. Depending upon the geographic location and population density, some technology centers have multiple campuses to serve the specific needs of the district. Annually, the Career Tech system has enrollments exceeding 21,000 high school students and almost 10,000 adults within the full-time educational programs that prepare students for college or the industry recognized certifications needed for employment. Additionally, the industry-specific training along with the Adult and Career Development courses have nearly 370,000 enrollments across the state each year.

Each technology center has a superintendent that provides leadership and oversight for the training programs, services, and personnel of the school. In Oklahoma, the minimum requirements to become a CTE Superintendent include the completion of an approved master's degree, public school superintendent certification, and the Oklahoma Technology Center Administrator's Credential. All individuals in this study

population have met the certification criteria and have experienced an educational leadership preparation program in their past.

In an effort to potentially gain perspectives of superintendents with a variety of recent experiences, purposeful sampling was utilized to select eight of the CTE Superintendents in Oklahoma. A detailed list of the twenty-nine CTE Superintendents that were under contract for the 2019-20 academic year was developed according to each technology center within the state. Through personal conversation with the superintendents, or with a representative at the ODCTE, the years of experience in the role of a CTE Superintendent for each of the individuals was determined. The superintendents were grouped into four categories based on the sampling criteria for this research. The following table represents the population based on experience in the role of a CTE Superintendent.

Table 2

*Oklahoma CTE Superintendents' Experience (2019-2020)*

| Group | Years of CTE Superintendent Experience | # of CTE Superintendents |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Entering 1st Year | 4 |
| 2 | One to Three Years | 7 |
| 3 | Four to Ten Years | 11 |
| 4 | Ten Plus Years | 7 |

The goal of the sample selection was to select two groups of individuals with specific years of experience in the role of CTE Superintendent. Individuals entering into their first year as a CTE Superintendent in the 2019-20 academic year were identified but

not selected for this research. The second group were the leaders that finished their first through third year in the role as a CTE Superintendent, and the third category of leaders were in their fourth through tenth year in their role as superintendent. These two groups were identified as the specific target populations from which to select the sample participants.

The criteria were based on the common belief for basic mastery of a job skillset to extend over a three-year period for most individuals. Based on this assumption, Group Two would be in the mastery development phase and Group Three would potentially have a more grounded perspective of their leadership strengths and challenges. Lastly, individuals with ten or more years of experience were placed in the fourth grouping but were not included in the sample selection. This exclusion was based on an attempt to gain perceptions from individuals with more recent experiences in their initial role as CTE Superintendent.

**Sample Selection Considerations**

The list of potential CTE Superintendents to be chosen for this study exceeded the research framework, allowing the opportunity to purposefully select the eight individuals in anticipation of gaining diverse experiences. Factors considered in the purposeful sample included both individual and district demographics that could potentially influence the perceptions of these leaders based on their experiences.

**Individual Factors.** The individual factors were limited to the years of experience as a CTE Superintendent and degree completions. The factor of determining the leadership experience was accomplished in the development of the population,

identifying the specific years of administrative experiences in the role of a CTE Superintendent. The seven individuals who have been a superintendent of a technology center in Oklahoma for one to three years were identified as Group 2. Those leaders with four to ten years of experience as a CTE Superintendent were included in Group 3, which included eleven individuals.

In the preliminary research for the selection of the individuals, the attainment of a doctorate degree was also examined in anticipation of gaining perspectives of individuals that had experiences in both a master's and doctorate leadership preparation program. The following table identifies the number of individuals within each grouping that have attained a doctorate degree. As demonstrated in Table 4.2, only one superintendent within the two research groups for this study had obtained a doctorate degree.

Table 3

*Oklahoma CTE Superintendents with Doctorate Degree (2019-2020)*

| Group | Years of CTE Superintendent Experience | # of CTE Superintendents with a Doctorate Degree |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Entering 1st Year | 1 |
| 2 | One to Three Years | 1 |
| 3 | Four to Ten Years | 0 |
| 4 | Ten Plus Years | 4 |

**District Demographics.** While the purpose of this research was to gain perceptions related to their educational leadership preparation, the influence of the district demographics, including size, geographical location within the state, and number of campuses were believed to have a potential impact on the perceptions of the CTE

Superintendents regarding their capacity and preparation to fulfill their roles. District size, based on total enrollment, would also influence the number of staff and overall operation responsibilities. The locations of Career Tech schools across the state could also impact perceptions due to the different challenges associated with a rural school as compared to close proximity to a large metropolitan area. Having more than one campus for a school district provides different challenges as compared to a single operation site for district leaders. Therefore, district size, location, and the number of campuses the leaders were responsible for operating were all chosen as sampling criteria.

The Career Tech school districts for the two sample groups of CTE Superintendents were grouped into two categories based on their total enrollment. These consisted of the schools with a total enrollment of less than 12,000 and schools with 12,000 or more total enrollments. These enrollments included the high school junior and senior students as well as adult students in the Full-Time Programs, the Business and Industry training enrollments, and the Adult Career Development classes. The following table represent the technology center total enrollments where the CTE Superintendents from Groups Two and Three are currently employed.

Table 4

*Oklahoma Technology Centers Based on Total Enrollment (2019-2020)*

| | Total Enrollment of Less Than 12,000 | Total Enrollment of 12,000 or More |
|---|---|---|
| Group 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Group 3 | 7 | 4 |

Note. Group 2 represents superintendents with 1-3 years of experience, Group 3 represents superintendents with 4-10 years of experience.

The location of the schools within Oklahoma were grouped into five categories based geographically to include the Oklahoma City metropolitan area and the four quadrants that are separated by the two major interstates. After identifying the individuals in the sample population that would qualify for each of the research groups, the locations of the schools were considered to prevent gaining similar experiences from CTE Superintendents that could exist from only a concentrated area of the state. The final selection of participants included CTE Superintendents from rural to urban and geographically diverse. The technology center locations for the two sample groups were labeled as: Northwest (NW), Northeast (NE), Southeast (SE), Southwest (SW), and Central Oklahoma (C). The following table represents the technology center total geographical locations where the CTE Superintendents from Groups Two and Three are currently employed.

Table 5

*Oklahoma Technology Centers Based on Geographical Location (2019-2020)*

| | NW | NE | SE | SW | C |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Group 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 |

Note. Group 2 represents superintendents with 1-3 years of experience, Group 3 represents superintendents with 4-10 years of experience.

To gain the diverse perspectives of CTE Superintendents who oversee one campus as compared to multiple campuses, the number of campuses within the technology center district was also considered. The responsibility for leading and providing oversight for more than one location could also influence the superintendent's perspective of their leadership preparation experiences. Therefore, as a part of the

purposeful sampling, CTE Superintendents were chosen that represented schools with single and multiple campus locations. The following table represent the technology center campuses where the CTE Superintendents from Groups Two and Three are currently employed.

Table 6

*Oklahoma Technology Centers Based on Number of Campuses (2019-2020)*

| | Single Campus Location | Multiple Campus Locations |
|---|---|---|
| Group 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Group 3 | 6 | 5 |

Note. Group 2 represents superintendents with 1-3 years of experience, Group 3 represents superintendents with 4-10 years of experience.

## Sample

Within the population for this study, a wide range of differences in training, location, and district size were represented. Therefore, participants were chosen, in anticipation of gaining perceptions that would prove beneficial in accomplishing the goals of the research study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted, "Purposeful sampling is based on an assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 96). As expected in the selection, these differences and experiences all contribute to the development of the CTE Superintendents' perceptions related to the knowledge and skills essential for successful leadership. The final selection of participants for this research study was based on an expectation of gaining differences in perceptions due to the individual factors and district diversities. The demographics related to the eight CTE

Superintendents selected for this research can be better understood through the following information and related tables.

**Participant Demographics.** To gain a better understanding of each of the CTE Superintendents selected for this research, the following demographics are provided. Due to the small population of only twenty-nine CTE Superintendents in Oklahoma and to ensure anonymity from their participation in the study, information regarding the individual or the Career Tech school has been aggregated. However, the following explanation provides a clearer context into each participant's background and the technology center each is leading. Superintendents were coded using the "S" followed by a number to assist with anonymity as well as maintaining accuracy of the data.

Superintendent 1 (S1) has been the superintendent of Technology Center 1 (TC1) for the past two years, located in the northeast region of the state. Prior to becoming a CTE Superintendent. This superintendent taught in the public school setting, then held various administrative positions in public schools and at another technology center. Over the course of the past year, TC1 has trained approximately 325 high school and adult students as well as logged almost 5000 training hours for local business and industry. The technology center district has eight sending high schools located within a district population of nearly 40,000 patrons. Compared to the other technology centers in the state, TC1 ranks as one of the least funded technology centers in the state in overall revenue, at 4 million dollars per year, and has only one campus location.

Superintendent 2 (S2) is entering into his/her second year as a CTE Superintendent at Technology Center 2 (TC2). Professional experiences include teaching

in the public-school setting prior to teaching and administrative positions at TC2. Combining enrollments from all three campuses, TC2 had nearly 1,600 high school and adult students along with the 26,000 business and industry training hours last year. The large district spans 1,300 square miles, has over 160,000 patrons, and has a total of twenty sending high schools, which are located in large and small communities within the southwest region of the state. The total revenue of $32 million generated at TC2 ranks in the top of all the technology centers in the Oklahoma.

Superintendent 3 (S3) has only worked at Technology Center 3 (TC3) since leaving the public-school classroom. Numerous years were spent in teaching and administrative capacities at TC3 prior to becoming the superintendent. Entering into his/her second year as a CTE Superintendent, this leader oversees the training programs for over 500 high school and adult students along with the business and industry training division that logged almost 9,000 training hours during the previous school year. Located in the northeast quadrant, this technology center encompasses thirteen high school districts, including one large high school and twelve rural schools. Ranking in the lower half of technology centers in district revenue at $11 million, the district has over 50,000 patrons, and only one campus.

Superintendent 4 (S4) is the Superintendent/CEO of a large technology center (TC4) located in an urban area of central Oklahoma with a district population of over 300,000. Entering into his/her third year as a CTE Superintendent, this leader worked in administrative positions at TC4 since leaving the government and private sector. Responsible for overseeing the $37.5 million budget, this leader's professional experiences in education were gained through the administrative experiences at TC4.

Multiple campuses offer training to over 1,300 high school and adult students along with the 15,500 training hours for business and industry partners. This district encompasses one large and one small urban high school district.

Superintendent 5 (S5) leads one of the largest technology centers in the state, covering 11,000 square miles and over ninety rural sending schools in southeast Oklahoma. This individual has completed five years at a CTE Superintendent, all at Technology Center 5 (TC5). Prior to this, he/she taught in Oklahoma public schools and at TC5, before beginning the administrative journey to become a superintendent. Educating almost 2,400 high school and adult students along with the yearly 20,000 business and industry training hours, TC5 has a yearly revenue of $32 million to operate eleven campus locations.

Superintendent 6 (S6) provides leadership and oversight at Technology Center (TC6) in the northwest quadrant of the state, with a high school and adult student enrollment of over three hundred students, and almost an additional 8,000 hours of training for business and industry. The TC6 district includes eight public schools with a total population exceeding 25,000. The yearly revenue of $7 million is utilized on one campus along with a partnership program at a local high school. S6 professional experiences include working at three different technology centers across the state in both teaching and administrative capacities. The current school year marks his/her seventh year as a CTE Superintendent.

Superintendent 7 (S7), located at Technology Center 7 (TC7), in the northwest area of the state, has served in the capacity of CTE Superintendent/CEO at two different

technology centers. Entering into his/her eighth year as the Superintendent/CEO, this leader had numerous administrative experiences at three technology centers and an educational agency after teaching experience at a public school, all in Oklahoma. The district revenue of $14 million is utilized to train over 650 high school and adult students as well as support the nearly 16,000 business and industry training hours, located on one main campus with several off-site training facilities. This technology center district has ten sending high schools, including one large Oklahoma community.

Superintendent 8 (S8) had teaching and administrative experiences in public education before coming to Technology Center 8 (TC8) as the superintendent nine years ago. Serving fourteen rural high schools across its district, TC8 educates less than 250 high school and adult students each year. The business and industry training division logs approximately 7,000 hours per year. Located in the southeast area of the state, TC8 has a yearly revenue of almost $6 million, one campus location, and over 40,000 patrons.

**Group Demographics.** The eight CTE Superintendents selected for this research study collectively have commonalities on their journey to become selected as the district leader. These are important to consider as they could have influence on their perceived preparedness for their role. In regard to their undergraduate preparation in education and their early career experiences, the following commonalities were brought to light:

- Interviewees earned their bachelor's degrees at three different higher education institutions in Oklahoma and seven began their educational career as traditionally certified teachers.

- Seven of the superintendents had experience as a classroom teacher, with six starting their career in a public-school setting.
- Six had taught CTE courses at some point during their teaching career, but of those, 4 taught CTE courses at a technology center.
- Excluding one individual who had not been a teacher, the average years spent in a teaching capacity was 11 years, with a range spanning 2 to 22 years.

Demographics related to the CTE Superintendent's Educational Leadership Preparation program include:

- All master's degrees were earned at Oklahoma higher education institutions, with seven returning to their alma mater for their graduate degree.
- Only one individual completed extra coursework beyond their master's degree to gain their superintendent's certification.
- Only one had earned a doctorate, the others expressed no desire to gain additional degrees.

The administrative journey to becoming a CTE Superintendent for the sample group included notable facts such as:

- All superintendents assumed an administrative position within five years of completing their master's degree.
- Two interviewees had spent time as a public-school administrator during their career.

- Five of the superintendents worked in an administrative capacity at their current technology center before becoming superintendent, the remaining three had worked at 2 to 4 different Oklahoma technology centers.
- Only one superintendent had left the education profession since their undergraduate degree completion.
- Seven of the participants had only been a CTE Superintendent at their current school. The other had been a superintendent at two other technology centers.
- The time between the completion of the master's degree and becoming a CTE superintendent was an average of 16 years, with the exception of one individual who became a superintendent within one year.

Considering that the eight CTE Superintendents in this study have only been employed in public schools or Career Tech schools in Oklahoma demonstrates their dedication to the students and teachers within the state. The commitment of this group of leaders to the field of education is represented by the average tenure of 31 years. This group of educational professionals have experienced undergraduate and graduate degree programs in Oklahoma and have worked in a variety of administrative experiences that add credibility and valuable perceptions that are being sought for this particular research study.

## Data Analysis

The sample list of eight CTE Superintendents, purposefully selected with the anticipation of gaining valuable perceptions to fulfill the research purpose, were contacted via their school email. A detailed explanation of the study, the research

purposes, and participation requirements were included in this initial communication that requested a response related to their optional participation for in this study. Each of the eight selected CTE Superintendents agreed to participate in the research project. Times were arranged to interview the leaders at their technology center and observe their working environment.

Throughout the data collection process, personal interviews were conducted with each of the CTE Superintendents, time was spent observing their leadership responsibilities, and artifacts were collected that could assist in the triangulation of data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasized the importance of the triangulation of data sources as a "powerful strategy for increasing the credibility or internal validity" of research (p. 245). A constant comparative method of data analysis began as the initial data was being collected in regard to the leaders and continued throughout the interview and observation phases to ensure thoroughness and accuracy of the data.

Artifacts and documents collected on-site during the observations include items such as the district profile, organizational charts demonstrating the number of employees and supervisory responsibilities, superintendent job descriptions, training course brochures to help identify the number and types of courses offered, and marketing materials. Information was also gathered from each of the district's websites as well as the data and material available on the ODCTE website. Journal notes from the observation that recorded the superintendent's interactions with staff members, tasks they may have performed, descriptions of office environment, school mission statements, and descriptions of the perceived culture within the buildings. The myriad of artifacts and

documents were utilized throughout the data analysis process to add validity the data gathered through the interview transcripts.

This process of organizing and making sense out of the data that was collected for this research involved continuously "consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen read" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 200). The interviews were personally transcribed and then read multiple times to assist in identifying commonly used key words or phrases. The journal notes and the artifacts, collected both at the schools and through online research, were also coded and grouped into tentative categories to assist in identifying the themes would eventually emerge from the data.

This inductive process was repeated multiple times to ensure the true context of the leaders' responses were accurately perceived by the researcher and to allow the data to reveal precise themes. The four guiding questions for this research study were continually reflected upon through the constant comparative process of the data analysis, assisting in maintaining the application of the data to the purpose of research. Lastly, no significant differences in perceptions were identified between the individuals with one to three years of experience or four to ten years in the role of a CTE Superintendent. Therefore, the data was utilized collectively to allow the themes to develop.

## Themes

After thorough and intentional analysis of the interview transcripts, observations, and collected artifacts, the following themes emerged that aligned to the research questions for the study.

- *Theme 1: There was a lack of applicable content in educational leadership programs for CTE leadership positions.*

Each of the individuals in the research study experienced similar graduate degree programs from universities within Oklahoma that were required to gain the credentials to become a CTE Superintendent. Due to the differences in the mission and educational content at Career Tech schools, the superintendents believed the content within the programs did not have the specific knowledge and skills needed for a CTE administrator. Their perceptions were the educational leadership programs did not help prepare them for their role of leadership.

- *Theme 2: The knowledge and skills in the educational leadership programs were focused on K12 school leadership which is different than needed in CTE leadership.*

The coursework in the educational leadership programs experienced by the interviewees contained K12 specific information that did not pertain to Career Tech centers. While CTE administrators have responsibilities for high school juniors and seniors, they also have adult students and trainees from the business and industry sector. The graduate programs were so heavily designed for educators desiring to enter the role of a public school administrator, the CTE Superintendents perceived the content did not have application to leadership at a Career Tech center.

- *Theme 3: Specific knowledge as well as technical, human, and conceptual skills are needed in the role as a CTE Superintendent.*

Through the course of the interviews and conversations while observing the leaders, they presented examples of knowledge and skills needed for a CTE Superintendent. During the data analysis, it was realized the similarities and commonalities in the needed skills, which was reduced to a concise list. This list of essential skills is specific for an educational administrator within the field of CTE.

## Explanation of Themes

The four research questions guiding this study can be addressed through the themes that emerged through the data analysis. After careful consideration, it was concluded that by grouping the first two research questions with themes one and two, then using theme three to address the final two research questions would allow for the most concise and supportive method to unpack the data. The four research questions for this study and the aligning themes are supported with the accompanying data to demonstrate alignment.

*Research Question 1: How do CTE Superintendents describe their educational leadership preparation experiences?*

*Research Question 2: How do CTE Superintendents perceive the utility of skills learned in their preparation programs?*

*Theme 1: There was a lack of applicable content in educational leadership programs for CTE leadership positions.*

*Theme 2: The knowledge and skills in the educational leadership programs were focused on K12 school leadership which is different than needed in CTE leadership.*

Through the interview process, the superintendents were asked to reflect on the experiences from their graduate degree program that was required to gain the certifications to become a CTE Superintendent. Considering an average of sixteen years had lapsed from the completion of the educational leadership preparation program to becoming a superintendent, the eight individuals were able to still reflect on their experiences and the utility of skills in relation to their current job responsibilities. The CTE superintendents openly shared examples of their graduate-level educational leadership preparation and their perception regarding the application to the challenges they face in their role as a CTE superintendent.

The themes of (a) a lack of applicable content in educational leadership programs for CTE leadership positions and (b) the knowledge and skills in the educational leadership programs were focused on K12 school leadership which is different than needed in CTE leadership, emerged through the data collected. While a few positive examples of a particular course or professor were presented, the overarching perception was the required preparation experiences through their graduate degree program did not prepare them for their leadership position in a Career Tech school. The following excerpts from the interviews with the eight CTE Superintendents demonstrate their individual perceptions of the formal educational leadership experiences and the impact it had on their leadership development. The superintendents were coded using an abbreviation of S (Superintendent) following by a number that was used to catalog all the responses and data collected.

Table 7

*CTE Superintendents' Educational Leadership Preparation Perceptions*

| Superintendent | Response |
|---|---|
| S1 | Educational leadership program was weak, a lot of philosophy, but zero practical application. Really geared for common education. Nothing in the master's program has assisted me. |
| S2 | It almost felt like a joke. Very simple, did not prepare me. |
| S3 | I felt it was so heavily geared to public school and things we don't even have to do. |
| S4 | Well, not a lot to it. Really a joke I thought. Nothing in there for Career Tech. Not a lot of rigor. Twenty-percent effective or so, maybe. |
| S5 | As far as administration, I don't think it helped me. Nothing about how the Career Tech system worked. |
| S6 | Well, honestly nothing. I knew I had to do it, so I did. Did not help in my development into a Career Tech Superintendent. |
| S7 | It was disappointing. I felt like I was paying my money and jumping through hoops. |
| S8 | I don't recall anything life changing. Just something I had to do to move up in education. |

While the comments may sound negative in nature, it did not seem the CTE Superintendents' expressions were through a tone of frustration or resentment, but instead as a past event that has been dismissed amidst their daily leadership responsibilities within their district. During our conversations, however, there were some positive reflections related to their graduate degree program. While these were not commonly agreed upon and the overall perceptions were that the programs did not prepare them for CTE leadership, it is important to demonstrate that some positive components did stand out in their minds.

**Positive components**

**Courses.** A few leadership preparation courses continued to arise in the interviews including School Law and School Finance that CTE Superintendents voluntarily identified. One superintendent, S3, described his/her School Finance course as "some rudiments were decent" and another, S8, appreciated understanding how public school finance worked. School Law was described as a "good basic introduction to legal issues related to students and personnel" by S8 and deemed as "probably the most important course at the time" by S5.

**Program Content**. Specific content or components of the courses and programs were highlighted in their reflections as well. For example, to S6, the introduction to the differences in adult learners and how "you can't teach everyone the same" was "eye opening." The human resources content was seen as relevant to S3 and described as some of the same things are going to happen if you are in Career Tech or public school such as terminating teachers or "what you can and can't say." Another superintendent,

S2, also agreed the "whole experience helped working with people" and he/she saw benefit to the human resources content of the program.

**Professors**. Even though the educational leadership programs for the interviewees were not a recent encounter, individual professors were identified that continued to stand out in their minds. For example, S1 talked about a School Law professor that was an attorney prior to returning as an educator, providing "a different perspective on education" to "help avoid ending up in litigation," deeming S1 to describe him as a "really good professor." S7 presented a similar example of "one professor was more practical, talked about the ins and outs of running a school."

**Secondary benefits**. Aside from the courses, content, or professors, the superintendents also spoke of what they felt were secondary benefits to their educational leadership programs. For one superintendent, S8, they felt the networking with other Career Tech educators who were also taking the courses had continued to benefit them throughout their career. This was remembered as an opportunity to share information and be exposed to different resources and people in Career Tech education. Another superintendent, S4, noted how the graduate program "expanded my thought process" and "helped me think differently."

### Ineffective Components

**Courses.** Numerous times throughout the interviews, all the superintendents made comments related to how the focus of the program, courses, content and instructors were centered around public education or K12 schools, and did not contain enough Career Tech knowledge and skills to prepare them for their role. These comments

included: “I wished it was geared more for Career Tech” (S3), “more focus on public ed” (S5), “nothing about Career Tech” (S2), “it was a K12 geared program” (S8), “the educational leadership program didn’t help” (S7)” “the professors only understood K12 education,” and “there was nothing that helped me prepare” (S4)” One superintendent, S8, expressed his/her disappointment in this way, “I realized there is less knowledge about Career Tech education than I thought there was at the higher education level.” Another opinion was “colleges don’t look at it as a way to improve schools, only graduate students” (S1). Lastly, “a master’s program is good to help instructors move into their first role of leadership, but not the superintendency” (S6).

**Content.** As described more in-depth in the following sections, the CTE superintendents perceived the knowledge and skills for their leadership was not acquired through the educational leadership programs. These topics included finance, law, marketing, public relations, business and industry training (BIS), economic development, daily operations, board development, and school culture. As later described, this set of knowledge and skills was considered essential to their leadership and school management, but it was gained from other sources and not from their graduate programs. Instead, based on the interviews, the content was so heavily based on philosophy the superintendents believed there was little application to their jobs.

**Professors.** The professors responsible for delivering the program curriculum stood out in the minds of the interviewees as a negative factor. The perception was the instructors “were public finance people” (S6) or “one professor was horrible” (S8). Responses such as “I didn’t have the luxury of have [retired CTE superintendent] teach the course like others I know” (S1) also demonstrated his/her desire to learn from

professors that understood Career Tech education. Along with the specific examples, there was a negative connotation toward the various professors in the graduate programs encountered by the eight interviewees.

**Public Education Focus.** The interview questions for this study were intentionally designed to not create a research environment that would cause the interviewees to focus on the possible differences in Career Tech education and public-school education. Instead the questions were set to inquire about their leadership preparation for becoming a CTE superintendent. However, throughout the series of interviews, the superintendents would initiate comments regarding their perceptions of the different educational environments. During the course of the data analysis, it was discovered that all eight superintendents had made remarks, both directly and indirectly, related to the perceived differences in public education and CTE.

Table 8

*CTE Superintendents' Perceptions of Differences in Educational Institutions*

| Superintendent | Response |
|---|---|
| S1 | The mission of CTE is also different because we are focused on getting them jobs not just a diploma. |
| S2 | We are a choice, it's not like K12, they have to be there. We have to market and always rethink how we market. |
| S3 | Career Tech and high school are two totally different balls of wax. |

| | |
|---|---|
| S4 | We have to focus a lot on public relations and marketing for classes. K12 doesn't have to. |
| S5 | Career Tech education is a choice, not a requirement for high school diploma. The curriculum is totally different here. |
| S6 | This is just a different game, different things to deal with. |
| S7 | What we do in Career Tech is considered innovation in |
| S8 | K12. |
| | There is a different mindset here than in public education, a lot more strong-willed people, because these instructors come from industry and see education and their program differently. |

The perceptions of the eight CTE Superintendents were all similar in regard to their educational leadership preparation program. Each individual presented examples of their disappointments in preparing them to become a superintendent in a Career Tech school. They also strongly believed the programs were focused on public education or K12 leadership preparation. The interviewees unanimously made statements and references to the differences that exist between public education setting as compared to a Career Tech school, requiring different preparation, knowledge, and skills. Examples include the differences in student population from high school to adult students, the district revenue sources, business and industry training, and the economic development responsibilities. The data collected demonstrated a lack of applicable knowledge and

skills in the graduate programs to prepare school leaders for the role of becoming a CTE Superintendent.

*Research Question 3: What knowledge or skills do CTE Superintendents identify as important to the preparation of aspiring CTE leaders?*

*Research Question 4: What technical, human, and conceptual skills, as represented in the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development, do CTE Superintendents perceive are necessary for leadership in the CTE setting?*

*Theme 3: Specific knowledge as well as technical, human, and conceptual skills are needed in the role as a CTE Superintendent.*

During the interview process, the superintendents' perceived essential knowledge and skills for Career Tech leadership became very evident. Planned interview questions such as "If you were going to write a book about what they don't tell you in schools of educational leadership about preparation as a CTE administrator, what would you write" along with a reflection on how future CTE superintendents should be prepared, prompted them to reflect on their accumulated knowledge and skills gained during their career. As one superintendent stated, "there needs to be more training on the stuff that comes back on you as the superintendent" (S2).

After careful analysis and combing through the data, ten common topics emerged demonstrating that all CTE superintendents face similar challenges while leading and managing their schools. Superintendents made direct and indirect comments throughout the interviews that made references to the following list of needed knowledge and skills consisting of (a) Business and Industry Training, (b) Economic Development, (c) School

Finance, (d) Facilities and Equipment, (e) Accreditations and Reporting Agencies, (f) Human Resources and Personnel, (g) School Culture, (h) Leadership, (i) Public Relations and Marketing, and (j) School Board Development.

## Essential Knowledge and Skills

**Business and Industry Training.** Aside from the programs for high school students, another division for Career Tech schools includes Business and Industry Services (BIS) Training, which can span from assisting with new company development to organizing the needed and/or required training programs for the business' employees. Customized training is another component, consisting of determining specific training needs for a company, and coordinating the curriculum and instruction to meet that need.

All the interviewees identified or referenced the needed knowledge about BIS training for CTE superintendents. Comments included "it was a big abyss, there's a big difference between high school programs and BIS training, I had no clue about BIS" (S8) and "I didn't know anything about BIS or what makes BIS successful" (S3). The difference in this type of training includes the training schedule, which is determined by the work shift availability, adult learners who are often mandated to attend, developing customized curriculum and training materials, and coordinating adjunct trainers to conduct the training. One superintendent stated, "Understanding the importance of business and industry relations and the need for responsiveness in their training needs is critical for Career Tech superintendents" (S7).

According to artifacts collected on-site and online information from the district's websites, each of the eight schools in this study included a reference to customized

training provided for the business and industry sectors within their district. Examples included police departments, city government, military base training, fire departments, small business, corporations, health community, and the mining sector. The reported training hours for the eight Career Tech centers' BIS division ranged from 4,800 to 26,000 hours with enrollments ranging from almost 2,000 to 22,000 people. As a comparison to emphasize the scope of this training, the enrollment of high school juniors and seniors ranged from 200 to 2,400 students for these same technology centers.

**Economic Development.** According to the unique attributes that each Career Tech school has chosen to define themselves on the ODCTE website, economic development appeared to be a priority. The Career Tech schools identified their intentions to play a significant role or support efforts related to area economic development within their district. This included providing facilities and resources to offer a business incubator to advance the growth of business, providing specific school personnel to guide individuals in bid assistance, and meeting the various growth needs of the local communities. One school even claimed their role as the key to economic development and workforce development for their district. Four schools in this study included the term "workforce" in reference to their training focus, while two other schools acknowledged their role in the "economic prosperity in Oklahoma and beyond" in the district mission or vision statements. All eight of the Career Tech schools included the focus of meeting the needs of the workforce and the related impact on economic development on their website or online profiles.

Similarly, the superintendents' interviews reflected this same focus and the knowledge and skills to work with local economic development authorities being

essential to the success of their district. Demonstrating this skillset, one superintendent stated "I have no business sector background, only teaching and education, so it took me awhile to understand how we could help them" (S5). Another superintendent visited about the expansion of industry in their district, how their school was working with the local Indian tribes, and the focus of new manufacturing moving into the district. Six of the CTE superintendents voluntarily made comments or presented examples of their involvement in economic development within the district.

**School Finance.** The importance of a thorough understanding of Career Tech finance was another topic that was unanimously offered. The superintendents used examples such as the different revenue sources of Career Tech education including tuition, state and federal money, as well as local ad valorem income. This funding was also tied back to the conversations about economic development since 66% to 84% of their funding is from the local ad valorem income. To help bring this topic into better view, the total budgets these superintendents have oversight for ranges from four million to thirty-two million dollars a year. While most of the CTE superintendents made references to their chief financial officer, the superintendents still acknowledged their responsibility to know and understand the district budget and finances. Therefore, it is imperative they have the knowledge and skills to budget and manage these funds. "If you don't understand finance, you have to rely on the CFO and hope they are doing it right" (S2) was a statement presented during one of the interviews.

Included in the discussions about finance were the skills to understand their Estimate of Needs, to build and close out yearly budgets, and understand basic payroll practices. One superintendent stated when they became a superintendent, they didn't

know how to read the Estimate of Needs but had to learn and teach themselves. Another critical component was to balance the expenditures with the income since their funding does not come in regular allocations. Additionally, the majority of Career Tech schools do not use bond funds for building projects, therefore funds have to be set aside or utilize a lease purchase option. For instance, one interviewee stated, "We don't do bonds, so I have to look at other ways to finance buildings and equipment" (S8) and another said, "I had to learn what was involved in a lease purchase project and who can serve as the trust authority" (S3).

**Facilities and Equipment.** Regardless of the type of educational institution, school superintendents would likely identify ensuring the district's facilities are adequate and in a condition that creates an optimal learning environment for their students as a top priority. A difference exists however in preparing and equipping training facilities to meet the needs of the local high schools, business and industry, or to support the economic development growth in the district. Therefore, effective capital planning skills are essential for long term growth and expansion. One CTE superintendent suggested how they "need a Bible I could pull off the shelf to help me understand capital planning" (S3). The investments in the training equipment that must be aligned to the specific industry can become a challenge, and it was stated "it's amazing how fast it gets outdated and moved down" (S7).

Superintendents mentioned how they interact with architects in planning expansions or future campuses, requiring them to understand the different approval processes and everyone involved in creating a training environment. It was stated, "I had no idea what all was involved with a building expansion, so I had to go ask the

people I knew" (S3). Throughout the series of interviews, five of the eight superintendents specifically discussed the need for knowledge and technical skills related to training facilities, equipment, purchasing buildings or land, and overall capital planning.

**Accreditations and Reporting Agencies.** Due to the variety of training provided at a Career Tech school and the alignment to the related industry, understanding the accreditation processes and the variety of required reporting is necessary for CTE superintendents. A superintendent stated, new leaders "need training in dealing with accrediting bodies and understanding what is involved" (S2). Similarly, when visiting about the accrediting agencies, another interviewee stated, "that stuff would be foreign to a public-school administrator" (S6).

Examples shared by the superintendents related to the variety of accreditations that are aligned with the Full-Time Programs or BIS training at a Career Tech school included the program specific accrediting bodies such as the Board of Nursing, Board of Cosmetology, the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation, National Center for Construction Education & Research, and the National Incident Management System. Additionally, many of the Career Tech schools in Oklahoma are members of Technology Centers That Work, a division of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), which requires reporting and accreditation visits.

Since high school junior and seniors can attend Career Tech schools, the schools are accredited by the OSDE and ODCTE, which require reporting of high school credits, college credits, follow-up reports, retention and placement rates, and other information

regarding their students. The BIS divisions within the schools have to report training hours, enrollments, business penetration, bid assistance contract and other related statistics. The technical skills to understand all the required accreditation agencies was identified as an important for CTE superintendents.

**Human Resources & Personnel.** Dealing with human resources and personnel issues was a topic that was shared by all the CTE superintendents that required both time and attention, yet none of the interviewees remember this as a major topic or focus in their educational leadership preparation programs. When the superintendents brought up school law or legal issues, once again it typically stemmed from personnel issues. For example, one superintendent stated, "It was a new experience, deciding when to engage the attorney with personnel issues" (S3).

The common theme discussed centered around the need to hire the right people, which also requires understanding career and technology education, but more specifically the knowledge and skills needed for each particular position. Superintendents also faced the need to restructure due to incorrect staffing patterns, dealing with terminations and non-reemployments, and working through the challenge of hiring personnel from industry and training them to work in an educational environment. An interesting perspective was also presented related to having difficult conversations with employees that were former peers prior to their appointment to superintendent.

The fact that many Career Tech instructors come from an industry background as compared to a traditionally degreed and certified teacher also influences how personnel

issues are handled. While personnel issues are faced by all school superintendents, the personnel demographics at Career Tech schools differ and oftentimes require a different approach, requiring CTE superintendents to have the knowledge and human skills for effective leadership. Emphasizing the importance of this topic, one superintendent stated "if you asked me the things that keep me awake at night, it would be personnel. Making sure I make the right decisions concerning people" (S1).

**School Culture.** The topic of school culture was woven throughout the responses of the interviews by the CTE superintendents. After analyzing their comments, two sub-categories emerged in relation to school culture consisting of: 1) the influence of the superintendent and 2) the challenges related to creating or maintaining a positive culture.

"The core of being a leader is creating a healthy environment and a healthy culture for the employees because it impacts everything we do here" was stated by one superintendent (S2). Other interviewees also referenced how administration plays a huge role of influence on the culture of a school. The influence of a superintendent on creating a healthy and inclusive culture was centered around the necessity of the leader to set and maintain high expectations for all staff. One superintendent separated this further by asking the following questions: 1) "How do you build a school culture if you are a new superintendent" and 2) "How do you change a culture that you have been a part of for several years?" Examining the gathered artifacts and data, this was faced by all the CTE superintendents in this study since three of the interviewees entered as a superintendent in a new school and the other five had been a part of the existing culture prior to their promotion.

The second sub-category involves the challenges or influencers on the school culture. These ranged from the impact of decisions, to getting everybody on board with the mission, to changing the mentality, to developing of spirit of comradery. For administrators that move from public education to Career Tech, it was noted the mindset, focus and mission of CTE staff is different than what they have experienced, and this must be accounted for when considering school culture influences. One superintendent summarized it by saying, "culture makes a school run really well and makes for a great organization because everyone feels a part" (S6). The ability to navigate the challenge of maintaining or changing a school culture requires effective conceptual and human skills from the leader.

**Leadership.** Examining the organizational charts from the eight Career Tech schools, it is evident by the titles of Superintendent/CEO for seven of the interviewees, as well as by their direct supervisory responsibilities of only top administrative positions, the superintendent resides in the top leadership role in the district. However, this responsibility comes with challenges, as discussed in the on-site interviews, and leadership can be a complex and challenging issue as the individual transitions into a superintendent position. The following quotes from the CTE Superintendents demonstrates the need for leadership to be a major component in the educational leadership preparation programs and provides direct insight from individuals who serve in the Career Tech superintendent capacity.

Table 9

*CTE Superintendents' Identification of Leadership Skills*

| Component | Superintendent Interpretation |
|---|---|
| Knowledge | I take the people with me to help me through what I don't know. I surround myself with those who know what I don't know. |
| Confidence | You've got to be confident in yourself as a superintendent to hire the right people that are smarter and brighter than you are. It takes confidence to do that |
| People Development | It's about people development, making sure you have the right people in the right places |
| Mindset | Sometimes I need to change my mindset for the good of the district |
| Expectations | You have to clearly establish expectations with direct supervisors and the leadership team has to be aligned |
| Safety | I want everybody to feel safe, valued and respected |
| Delegate Leadership Team | You have to put others in situations where they can lead and handle it |
| Teamwork | Keep people around you that are doers and can get things done." |
| Control | You always have to work on teamwork<br>In this seat I am responsible for setting the tone and can't let the little things slide |

The topic of leadership is likely one of the most studied and written about topics. However, the direct application can be different depending on the type of organization. While the focus of this study was not to explore the various leadership struggles of the superintendents, it became apparent that each had experienced circumstances in their position that caused these statements to be deemed worthy of relaying to future CTE superintendents in their educational leadership preparation journey. For long-term successful leadership, the superintendents must not only have the applicable knowledge, but possess the technical, human and conceptual skills to achieve the goals for their Career Tech school.

**Public Relations and Marketing.** Interacting and communicating with community stakeholders was cited multiple times as a major focus and consumer of the superintendents' time. Most superintendents expressed their responsibility to be involved in a variety of community organizations, being a speaker at functions, be involved politically, and visible in the communities that are served by the Career Tech school. This seemed to be a transition from their previous administrative responsibilities that included primarily the supervision of a division or as an assistant superintendent overseeing daily activities on the campus. The need to be continually aware of the political environment and having a close relationship with the local legislators was also emphasized as a priority of their time.

Similarly, networking and socializing with other Career Tech superintendents was important professionally for the leaders. The benefits of this form of public relations was communicated as being critical when you are having problems or issues and need to rely on other's who have the strengths and expertise related to CTE. Having a relationship

with others and "knowing who you can call, and knowing you can trust their knowledge" (S4) was cited as important for both new and experienced CTE superintendents.

Communicating to the stakeholders regarding the programs, trainings, and services provided at the local Career Tech school was identified as something different than public education. Considering all the training functions of a Career Tech school, marketing and recruiting efforts have to include everyone from high school students to adults of all ages to businesses requiring specific employee training. As stated by a superintendent, "One thing that is really different is recruiting. I think you approach things differently when students don't' automatically come to you" (S7).

The acquired knowledge and skills to manage a district while also being involved in a variety of off-campus activities and functions was a finding that was expressed by each of the superintendents in this study. If community relationships are not built and continual marketing of the programs and training are not conducted, the impact will be noticed in the enrollment, tuition income, training functions, and economic growth within the Career Tech school district.

**School Board Development.** An interesting and unexpected topic that continued to arise was the interactions the superintendents had with their board members on a regular or scheduled basis. It became apparent the importance of board development and ensuring the members also understand the wide array of training responsibilities in a Career Tech school for proper district oversight functions. While all comments had positive connotations, I began to realize how many examples were given that involved board members. All of the CTE superintendents interviewed were in districts that had

five board members and only had one regularly scheduled board meeting per month. During one of the interviews a board member came to the office, necessitating a need to pause to allow the superintendent to have a private conversation.

Six superintendents initiated the topic of the importance of developing a close relationship with the board members. As one superintendent stated, "Wherever you go, your board relationship and their trust in you is the most crucial thing you will have as superintendent" (S4). The superintendents presented examples of calling or making a personal visit to the members prior to the monthly meetings to review the agenda and answer any potential questions. Discussions also stemmed around knowing your board and giving them the information and data needed to help them make decisions. As events happen on campus or within the communities, it was illustrated that they keep their board members informed on a regular basis. Three of the superintendents even shared examples of periodically meeting a member for coffee or lunch. Developing a supportive and informed board of education was another example of human and conceptual skills that are needed by CTE superintendents.

## Summary

As identified through the interviews with the eight CTE Superintendents and triangulating the "different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes" (Creswell, 2014, p. 201), it became evident the educational leadership preparation programs were not beneficial in providing the essential knowledge and skills for CTE Superintendent leadership. The

programs were perceived as having a primary focus for leaders who desire to work in the public-school setting and did not contain beneficial content for CTE administrators.

Another important theme within this research that emerged was the specific list of essential knowledge and skills that were perceived for CTE Superintendent Leadership. This condensed list of ten key topics emerged that was deemed essential for by the eight interviewees and believed to be vital to the next generation of CTE Superintendents. This set of knowledge and skills was identified as different by the research group for CTE leadership as compared to public school leadership.

# CHAPTER V

# DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research data collected for this study revealed three major themes related to the perceptions of CTE Superintendents in Oklahoma in regard to their leadership preparation experiences. This chapter will explain these themes through the lens of the selected theoretical framework, discuss implications of this research study, and propose recommendations to further assist in preparing CTE Superintendents in the future.

## Theoretical Framework

To achieve the purpose of this research, which was to explore the perceptions of CTE Superintendents in Oklahoma in relation to how their educational leadership program prepared them for their role of leadership, a Skills Theory of leadership development theoretical framework was selected. According to Katz (1955), "a skill implies an ability which can be developed…and which is manifested in performance" (p. 34). Katz (1955) proposed the essential leadership components should be divided into three skillsets consisting of technical, human, and conceptual skills which comprise the Three-Skill Approach to leadership development. This theory is founded on the belief that the skills needed by an individual in an administrative role can be developed if they aspire to improve their leadership capacity and potential.

The development of technical skills is important as an individual begins their leadership journey in a supervisory capacity. Katz (1955) defined technical skills as "an understanding of, and proficiency in, a specific kind of activity, particularly one involving methods, processes, procedures, or techniques" (p. 34). This proficiency in understanding how an organization operates, knowing the expected rules and behaviors, and the competency in achieving the products or services provided by the organization must be honed by aspiring leaders (Rowe & Guerro, 2013). Leaders in their initial administrative or supervisory capacity must utilize the technical skills consisting of the knowledge related to the daily operations of their particular division or area of responsibility within an organization.

The human skills relate to an individual's ability to understand and work with people. In order to gain support and a followership, leaders must develop their skills in effective communication, motivation, and in understanding the challenges faced by the people in their organization. The personal connection, which includes being empathetic and sensitive to the needs of others, aids leaders when making decisions and establishing methods of motivation and recognition of accomplishments (Rowe & Guerro, 2013). In turn, human skills assist leaders in developing trust with peers and other employees, therefore impacting the culture and climate within the organization.

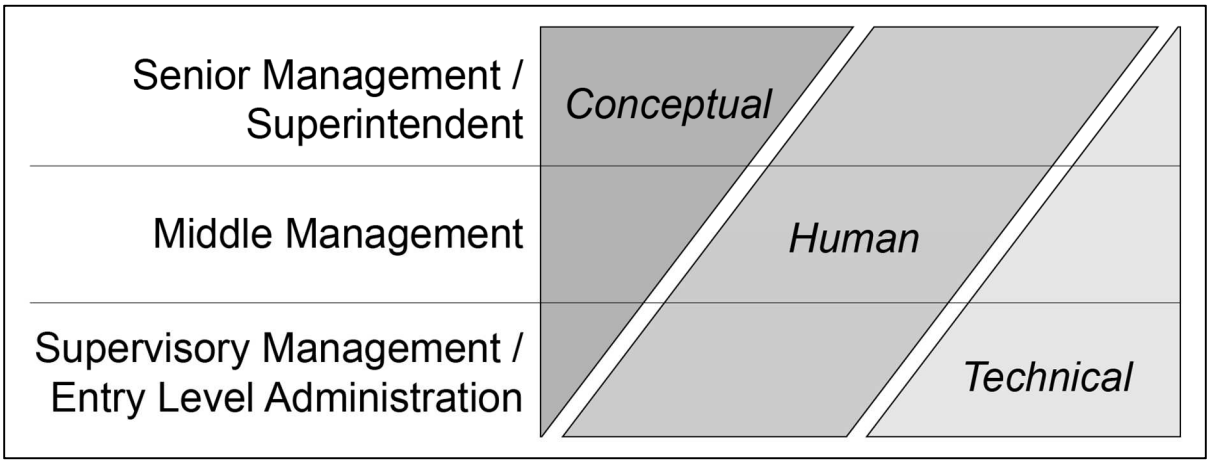
The development of conceptual skills involves being able to move past the management of the daily operations and "to see the enterprise as a whole…recognizing how the various functions of the organization depend on one another" (Katz, 1955, p. 35). This includes developing ideas and hypotheses to assist in advancing the organization in the future. Being able to ask abstract questions, viewing a situation with a different

mindset, or developing a conceptual plan that challenges conventional operations are all components of the conceptual skillset (Rowe & Guerro, 2013). The conceptual skills of a leader to develop new concepts or ideas, based on a thorough understanding of the organization's strengths and limitations, then effectively communicating these ideas to other leaders or subordinates, are essential for leaders in upper management.

The development and mastery of these three skills were viewed by Katz (1955) as different depending on the administrative responsibilities. For individuals assuming their first formal administrative position, the need for technical and human skills are more important for their daily leadership responsibilities than conceptual skills. They must understand the detailed functions and have the ability to lead a team or division within the organization. As a leader progresses in leadership positions, there becomes a greater need for the utilization of conceptual and human skills, while oftentimes the demand for technical skills begin to diminish. The following figure depicts the utilization of the three skills at different levels of leadership capacities.

Figure 3

Three-Skills Approach to Leadership Development



SOURCE: Adapted from "Skills of an Effective Administrator," by R. L. Katz, 1955, Harvard Business Review, 33(1), p. 33-42.

Using Katz's Three-Skill Approach as a lens to examine and bring context to the data and the themes that emerged from the research, will assist in a clearer understanding of the perceptions of the CTE Superintendents. Each of the three skills identified by Katz, including technical, human, and conceptual skills, will individually be utilized as a lens for the research. Additionally, the application of these three skills at different phases of administrative responsibilities including entry/supervisory level and senior/superintendent leadership will be applied to examine the progressive development and essential use.

## Application of Theoretical Lens

Through the utilizing the lens of the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development, a deeper understanding of the data and themes for this research study can be gained. The same format will be used as in Chapter 4 due to the similarities in research question one and two as well as the common elements in questions three and four. The following section applies the technical, human, and conceptual skills to the research questions and emerging themes.

### Research Questions

*Research Question 1: How do CTE Superintendents describe their educational leadership preparation experiences?*

*Research Question 2: How do CTE Superintendents perceive the utility of skills learned in their preparation programs?*

*Theme 1: There was a lack of applicable content in educational leadership programs for CTE leadership positions.*

*Theme 2: The knowledge and skills in the educational leadership programs were focused on K12 school leadership which is different than needed in CTE leadership.*

The lack of appreciation for the educational leadership programs in the preparation of the interviewees for their role of CTE Superintendent can be better understood through the application of each of the three skills included in this theoretical framework. As noted in Chapter Four and through the emerging themes, the interviewees did not have positive perceptions toward their graduate degree experiences. However, to understand why the lack of applicable content or the perceived focus on K12 school leadership, as noted in themes one and two, emerged through the data analysis, the following specific lens will be applied.

**Technical skills**. The interviewees repeatedly stated the graduate degree programs did not contain enough Career Tech information, the courses did not pertain to their jobs, or the programs were geared for public education administrators. Reflecting on the quotes used in Table 4.6, the superintendents spoke of "things we don't even have to do" (S2), "nothing about how the Career Tech system worked" (S5), or "zero practical application" (S6). While some individuals identified positive components from their preparation programs, as outlined in Chapter 4, their overarching perception was the programs did not align with their job responsibilities. The acknowledged differences in

public education as compared to CTE, also noted in Table 4.7, further illustrates the need for specialty or technical knowledge that differs from administrators working within other educational arenas.

During the course of the interviews and observations, the superintendents continued to highlighted knowledge and procedures related to leadership in the field of education, and particularly CTE. When reflecting on their educational leadership programs, that were required by the state to become a school administrator, examples of courses such as school law or school finance were specifically mentioned. While the knowledge and skills of law and finance have application in everyone's daily lives, for an administrator in the field of education, these two topics are highly context specific.

However, as identified by the interviewees, this knowledge may have some components that apply to all educational institutions, yet each type of educational institution requires specific knowledge for leaders. A theme that emerged through the research was the knowledge and skills in the educational leadership programs were focused on K12 school leadership which is different than needed in CTE leadership. The application of the technical skills lens can explain why the interviewees did not recognize these courses as being overall beneficial, due to the lack of specific technical skills related to CTE leadership.

The CTE Superintendents noted the differences in training high school students as compared to adult, the uniqueness of BIS training, the need to develop specific customized curriculum, and the difference in the educational equipment required for the CTE learning environments. Aligning with the technical skills component of CTE

leadership are the specific accrediting bodies for Career Tech programs and the detailed criteria required to maintain program compliance that ensures students are receiving the needed certifications. Reflecting on the need for proficient "use of tools and techniques of the specific discipline" (Katz, 1955, p. 34) in the development of the technical skills for administrators, further illustrates the differences that exist and helps to better understand the CTE Superintendent's desire for specific technical content in the preparation programs for educators who plan to work in the Career Tech system.

As demonstrated in figure 5.1, the technical skills are highly important as an individual enters into their entry or supervisory level of leadership. To prepare individuals for their first formal role of school leadership, technical skills are a major component of the educational leadership preparation programs. However, as noted in this research, there exists a need for CTE specific technical skills for those individuals desiring to work in a Career Tech center. While some content may have application to both public education and CTE, aspiring leaders need to perceive a relevance and application to the program content.

**Human skills.** The component of the graduate programs the CTE Superintendents were able to identify as having some application was related to the human skills content. For example, "the introduction to the differences in adult learners" (S1) and the different learning styles of students within an educational institution were identified in the interviews. The educational leadership programs were noted for helping the leaders know "what you can and can't say" (S2) to employees and helped advance their skills in working with people.

The examples provided by the interviewees related to the human skills were still limited and it was not communicated that the programs fully equipped them with the related human skills needed for their position as a CTE Superintendent. Along with the need for technical skills, the human skills component is a necessary foundation for educators transitioning from the classroom to administrative positions. However, there appeared to also be a difference in the specific human skills needed by administrators entering in the CTE setting.

One of the themes that emerged in the research was the lack of applicable content in the educational leadership preparation programs. Considering the differences in learners, including adults in the same programs as high school students, training employees within the business and industry sector, and the differences in teacher background and licensure, the human skills component becomes differentiated for CTE administrators. Working with people is crucial in any leadership role, but if an educator's background is teaching children or adolescents and only working with other educators who have experienced similar preparation experiences, the transition to an administrative role in a Career Tech center would present different human skill challenges. For example, the need to hire, coordinate, and train adjunct trainers or personnel from industry would require different human skills for CTE administrators as compared to public school administrators who are likely working with individuals who have obtained a bachelor's degree, have a foundation in student learning, and are already certified as an educator.

The human skills components that are included in the educational leadership programs are designed to assist individuals to transition to a role of not only managing

students, but also leading a group of staff members in the educational setting. Based on the perceptions of the individuals in this study, becoming a superintendent in the CTE setting requires managing and leading individuals from non-educational backgrounds. Therefore, the human skills components within the educational leadership program were perceived as needing specific skills that are directly applicable for aspiring CTE Superintendents.

**Conceptual skills.** Katz (1955) defined the conceptual skills within the Three-Skill Approach as "the ability to see the enterprise as a whole" including "recognizing how the various functions of the organization depend on one another." (p. 35). This involves being able to understand the "relationship of the individual business to the industry, the community, and the political, social, and economic forces of the nation as a whole" (Katz, 1955, p. 35-36). The utilization of conceptual skills at the entry or supervisory level of administration is limited, yet drastically increases over time as individuals transition into senior leadership positions.

As the interview questions transitioned from the inquiry concerning the specific correlation between the educational leadership preparation program and the content utilization in the role of a CTE Superintendent, to allowing the interviewees to define the essential knowledge and skills for their role, examples of conceptual skills were presented by all the interviewees. Considerable time was spent by the superintendents discussing the importance of business and industry training, the growth of businesses, and the impact of economic development within their districts. The CTE Superintendents recognized their school's role in the expansion of business and industry, yet the skills to

work with various entities to accomplish these goals are not common for educational administrators and was not included in their educational leadership preparation programs.

The lack of conceptual skills in the preparation programs that the CTE Superintendents in this study perceived as important, must be examined closer with the theoretical lens. The interviewees had a negative perception in regard to their educational leadership program and a lack of skill application to their role of leadership. However, it would be difficult to assume the preparation programs could adequately present individuals with the applicable conceptual skills for the role of CTE Superintendent. While a foundation of these particular skills could be imbedded, the conceptual skills appear to strengthen over time through professional experiences.

*Research Question 3: What knowledge or skills do CTE Superintendents identify as important to the preparation of aspiring CTE leaders?*

*Research Question 4: What technical, human, and conceptual skills, as represented in the Three-Skills Approach to leadership development, do CTE Superintendents perceive are necessary for leadership in the CTE setting?*

*Theme 3: Specific knowledge as well as technical, human, and conceptual skills are needed in the role as a CTE Superintendent.*

The application of the Three-Skills Approach theoretical lens not only provides a clearer context into the perceptions of the CTE Superintendents, but also provides insight into the skills needed at different levels of leadership. Katz (1955) identified the utilization of each of the technical, human, and conceptual skills throughout the career of an administrator and at the different levels of leadership. Considering the span of 16

years between achieving their master's degree and becoming a CTE Superintendent, and between two and ten years of experience in the role of a CTE Superintendent provides extensive experience in a variety of administrative positions. This theoretical lens will also be applied to the list of skills that emerged through this research including: (a) Business and Industry Training, (b) Economic Development, (c) School Finance, (d) Facilities and Equipment, (e) Accreditations and Reporting Agencies, (f) Human Resources and Personnel, (g) School Culture, (h) Leadership, (i) Public Relations and Marketing, and (j) School Board Development.

**Technical skills.** Using the technical skills lens, the superintendents identified the need for specialized knowledge and skills for those administrators desiring to pursue a role of CTE leadership that was different than a public school environment. While the technical skills related to the daily operations of the training programs offered at a Career Tech center are essential for the entry or supervisory levels of administration, CTE Superintendents must also have a solid technical skill foundation to enhance the human and conceptual skills for leadership. Even though the utilization of the detailed technical skills may diminish as individuals become a CTE Superintendent, there still exists a need for the technical skills underpinning which will have influence in the human and conceptual skill development.

As identified in the previous discussion, the technical skills for new CTE administrators to be adequately prepared for their first role of leadership should include specific knowledge and skills for their position of leadership. For example, coursework related to educational law or finance should contain specific technical knowledge so new administrators can make effective decisions within their divisions and not attempt to

apply knowledge or skills that aren't applicable. Other examples include the accrediting and reporting agencies for CTE programs, the unique challenge of training high school and adult students in the same program area, the necessity of skills related to marketing the training programs as compared to automatic enrollments, purchasing equipment to keep training programs aligned with industry, or the differences in the school cultures.

Reflecting on the comprised list identified, many of these have a technical skill foundation, yet seems to evolve into more of a conceptual skill as individuals transition into a superintendent role of leadership. This would include an awareness level of the other skills that must be present in regard to other divisional responsibilities of a Career Tech center. Examples would include BIS training, economic development, or human resources and personnel. As discussed further in the conceptual skills section, these skills are utilized differently by senior or superintendent level administrators, but are still needed on the technical awareness level for entry level administrators for effective decision making within their division.

**Human skills.** The human skills component of leadership appears to be vital to all school administrators job responsibilities. In the beginning of the administrative journey, an individual may only have to lead or influence a few employees in their division. As they progress to the role of CTE Superintendent, this changes from a divisional perspective to the entire organization, plus the district patrons, the board of education, legislators, and the business sector. The expansiveness of the personnel the superintendents were ultimately responsible for leading was also reflected the organizational charts and superintendent job descriptions collected at the schools.

The interviewees also emphasized the importance of being involved in their various communities to assist with business and industry growth and economic development. The skills to work with multiple communities and several public-school districts would also be a human skill that is different than public education superintendents. Therefore, while a basic understanding of working with people to create a positive work environment is critical for all superintendents, there appears to be a need for specific human skills related to leading people that do not have an educational background. Additionally, having to address issues with adult learners or working with the business and industry stakeholders are human skills that differ from other educational institutions.

The mastery of the human skills for the eight CTE Superintendents in the study can also be identified in their acknowledgement of the value of other individuals and evidenced by their long tenure within their schools. The interviewees were continually presenting examples related to the value of people to their organization and the importance of having professional relationships with board members, district patrons, and legislators. They recognized the need of having other administrators on their team that had the technical knowledge to address specific details related to the training and school operations. This set of human skills appears to become increasingly essential as an individual assumes the role of CTE Superintendent. As one interviewee stated, the one thing that has continued to keep him/her up at night was related to handling personnel issues within the district.

The impact of a CTE Superintendent's human skill development has a considerably greater challenge and the risk of public awareness if this skill has not been

effectively honed. Addressing the specific human skills needed for CTE administrators as a part of the educational leadership preparation programs appears to be a need as the next generation of aspiring leaders begin their journey. After a foundation of human skills has been established, it can be built upon through career experiences as the leader progress through administrative roles and responsibilities to become a CTE Superintendent.

**Conceptual skills**. The list of ten essential knowledge and skills that emerged from the interviews with the eight CTE Superintendents all had direct or indirect links to conceptual skills. An example would be effective capital planning to ensure the school facilities and training equipment are creating the optimal learning environment. This requires an individual to visualize the entire school operation, as well as understand why the investment in training equipment has to align with industry standards. The human resources and school culture components also present leaders with the challenge to exhibit their human skills, but "the whole future direction and tone of the organization" (Katz, 1955, p. 36) depends on the administrator's conceptual skill capacity to lead the staff to accomplish the district's mission and strategic goals.

The superintendents presented examples related to the significance of working with manufacturing and other industries to expand and grow, to not only fulfill a need of their particular district, but the district revenue impact the business growth would yield in ad valorem income. Triangulation of the data sources reinforced these components when considering the number of high school students, 200 to 2,400 students, trained by the Career Tech Schools and the number of adults, 2,000 to 22,000 adults, trained in the business and industry division. Marketing materials and programs collected on-site also

solidified the focus on business training and community involvement at each of the Career Tech schools. The understanding of how these components work together were great demonstrations of their utilization of conceptual skills.

The superintendents expressed the necessity to be involved in community organizations, political activities, and to network with other Career Tech Superintendents. The ability of leaders to understand the impact of their public relation activities reflect their conceptual skills in leading the district by staying abreast of educational trends, legislation or political proceedings, and economic development activities. Due to the unique structure and responsibilities of Career Tech centers in Oklahoma, the superintendent must recognize how they must keep the entire organization in perspective with their leadership decisions. If the focus is only on one component, it will be reflected in the lack of an individual's ability to lead or the district not meeting the needs of the students and stakeholders.

The data collected in the interview and observation processes indicate a high demand for conceptual skills for individuals in the role of CTE Superintendent. Through the application of this theoretical lens of the Three-Skill Approach to the data and themes, the attainment and mastery of the conceptual skills seemed to be honed over time through experiences and knowledge gained over the multiple administrative positions held by the eight interviewees during their career. According to Katz, (1955), "conceptual skill embodies consideration of both the technical and human aspects of the organization" (p. 36). While a foundation of the technical and human skills could be included in educational leadership preparation programs, the conceptual skills for CTE

Superintendent leadership appear to be gained through career experiences in order to effectively comprehend the complexities associated with the mastery of this skill.

## Skill Attainment

While the eight CTE Superintendents in this study did not find value in their educational leadership preparation programs and did not perceive the experiences as preparing them for the role of CTE Superintendent, the leaders seemed to possess the essential technical, human, and conceptual skills for their leadership role. Using the Three-Skills Approach lens to explore the data even further, the sources of skill attainment can become observable. Through triangulation of the data, the various sources through which the superintendents gained these essential technical, human, and conceptual skills for leadership were categorized into professional experiences, professional development meetings, and training and programs provided by the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (ODCTE).

**Professional Experiences.** The CTE Superintendents included in this study had various administrative positions over the course of several years before they achieved their current position. The group with one to three years' experience as a CTE Superintendent had 8 to 26 years of administrative experience, with the four to ten years of experience group having 11 to 28 years of administrative related experience prior to becoming a CTE Superintendent. The professional experiences gained over the course of these years in the various administrative positions was perceived to have the most pronounced impact on their development. The CTE Superintendents continued to reflect on these professional experiences as shown in the following excerpts.

Table 10

*CTE Superintendents' Perceptions of Experiences*

| Superintendent | Response Related to Experience |
|---|---|
| S1 | I think for me, I learned more from my experiences as an assistant superintendent |
| S2 | For me, I learned so much working for [retired superintendent] and those experiences are what really prepared me |
| S3 | I learned from the three different superintendents over the years as a teacher and administrator |
| S4 | I learned a lot from my time at ODCTE |
| S5 | The time spent in the classroom and as a Director working with staff, students, and parents helped in my public relations skills |
| S6 | I think I learned more, good and bad, in my time at [Mountaintop Tech Center] than most people do in a lifetime |
| S7 | I learned more outside of the [higher education] classroom than I did in that program from real world issues |
| S8 | I learned what I know from my experiences and just years of being in admin positions |

This on the job training and mentoring from other administrators emerged as one of the major sources for knowledge and skill development. While these experiences occurred organically and were not systemically organized, they still were perceived as very beneficial in the leaders' skill preparation. Considering the benefits of the professional experiences, the question could be posed if an educational leader has not had the opportunity to gain these experiences and if they aren't provided in an Educational Leadership preparation program, how would they gain the needed knowledge and skills?

**Professional Development Meetings.** The educational professional development opportunities hosted by various organizations from the Oklahoma Secondary School Board Association (OSSBA), the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE), or other educational organizations were also mentioned during the onsite interviews. The superintendents made references to attending a conference or workshop that related to their particular job responsibilities at the time. One superintendent noted, "training by law firms, internal workshops, and state education workshops were much more beneficial than content in program" (S7). Another CTE Superintendent seemed very intentional about their professional growth and through stating, "I seek out PD [professional development] so I can get better and understand it more" (S1).

The professional development opportunities grouped into this category were focused on topics that applied across all educational platforms, such as human resources or educational law updates. Some of the meetings or conferences were focused primarily on public education, as noted by comments such as "it had a K12 focus, but was still good" (S5) or "even though it wasn't about Career Tech I feel like I got something out of it" (S2). Those superintendents that identified these opportunities as influential

voluntarily chose to attend in anticipation of gaining applicable knowledge or skills to their position.

**Training and Programs.** The professional development opportunities provided by the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (ODCTE) was a major source of knowledge and skills recognized by the CTE Superintendents. Specific programs identified included the Tech Cap Program, the High School Administrators' Program, and the New Superintendent's training for first year CTE Superintendents. Similarly, the professional development conferences and meetings hosted by the Oklahoma Association of Career and Technical Education (OKACTE) was mentioned as providing knowledge that is informational and beneficial to their roles as the district leader.

The Tech Cap program is a series of professional development meetings held across the state over the course of a year. This program is offered by the ODCTE every two years and include topics ranging from CTE funding and finance, BIS division overviews, full-time program spotlights, politics related to CTE, and leadership insights from CTE Superintendents. To emphasize the value of this program, one superintendent stated, "Tech Cap was more relevant than my master's program" (S3). This program is attended by aspiring leaders in the field of CTE at the coordinator or director level and provides an extensive overview of Oklahoma CTE.

One superintendent visited in-depth about their perceived benefit of the High School Administrator's Program, a professional development program offered by ODCTE. Although only one of the CTE Superintendents in this study attended and the

program, which is no longer offered, it seemed relevant as an advantageous for those public-school administrators that desire to have a leadership position in a Career Tech school. As described by S8, the program offered different perspectives of the wide array of training offered by the Oklahoma Career Tech system that includes high school and adult students, business and industry training, and the Skills Center training in various incarceration facilities across the state. Since high school administrators have experience focused on high school students or younger, this was seen as "eye opening" (S8) for an administrator that wanted to work in the Career Tech system in the future.

The ODCTE hosts regular meetings for administrators working in the capacity of an Instructional Leader, Business and Industry Director, or for Assistant Superintendents and Superintendents. These meetings focus on timely topics as well as networking opportunities for the administrators to learn from one another. While all the CTE Superintendents portrayed a positive perception of the ODCTE professional development activities, one superintendent specifically stated, "things we do within our internal system are excellent preparation for leadership" (S2).

The CTE Superintendents were able to organically acquire the knowledge and skills through professional experiences and professional development opportunities. However, to ensure quality preparation of future CTE leaders, the technical, human, and conceptual skills must be a component of educational leadership programs or other mandatory preparation experiences to ensure all leaders are equally prepared for future leadership as a CTE Superintendent.

## Limitations

While the research design of this qualitative case study was intentionally organized to gain a detailed understanding of the effectiveness of Educational Leadership programs in preparing CTE Superintendents, limitations continued to exist. At the onset of the research, it was decided to specifically seek the perceptions of CTE Superintendents that had completed their first year of district leadership but had not finished their tenth year with the anticipation of gaining recent experiences. This was not considered a limitation at the time of the research design due to the specific focus of the study. While some limitations were known, others were identified during the course of the data collection phase of the research.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), a "nonrandom, purposeful sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of many" (p. 254). While the findings of this research have unveiled what appear to be consistent and reliable data, due to the nature of this research design, the findings cannot be generalized to the entire population or to CTE Superintendents in other states. Additionally, although intentional efforts were exerted to conduct the research according to the planned design and all data was carefully recorded and checked, the replication of this study could still produce varying results.

The population of only twenty-nine CTE Superintendents in Oklahoma limited the individuals in which to select the sample group. The decision to interview eight of the superintendents was based on the belief that this would represent over twenty-five percent of the total population of CTE Superintendents in the state and this number was

believed to provide sufficient sampling. However, if the research design allowed the time and capacity to interview all twenty-nine superintendents or all the superintendents that had similar years of experience, this could have presented different data that could have yielded different themes.

The years of experience criteria was based on gaining perceptions from individuals who were in the mastery development phase of their leadership position with potentially fresh recollections of the relationship between their graduate degree program and their job responsibilities. During the 2019-20 school year, there were eighteen superintendents that met the particular criteria for the research design. The limitation of selecting only eight interviewees was also based on time and availability of the researcher. While the purposeful selection of the sample participants was centered on gaining a variety of perceptions based on district size and location, this selection could have had an unknown influence on the data. It is unknown if selecting other participants from the sample groups would have yielded the same data and themes.

The qualitative case-study design was dependent on the participants' memory and willingness to share their experiences. Considering the average of sixteen years from the time of the graduate degree completion to becoming a CTE Superintendent, the individual's memory of their experiences could also be considered a limitation. While several specific experiences continued to stand out in their mind, if the length of time between these two events were closer together, more examples could have potentially been presented. Although anonymity was ensured to all the participants, their willingness to share their perceptions could have been hindered by a concern of their responses being identified by other readers.

The experience and possible bias of the researcher must also be considered a limitation of the study. Considering the researcher is a CTE administrator in Oklahoma that has similar experiences as the individuals in this study, can be considered a possible bias. While the research purpose, design and data collection protocol were carefully planned and followed, the lack of experience on the part of the researcher could have caused certain data components to be missed. The researcher was intentional with all the data collection elements, yet acknowledges the lack of experience and possible bias in carrying out this research study.

## Implications

### To Practice

Understanding the crucial role that an administrator plays of ensuring the learning environment of any school is conducive for learning to take place, the leader must be properly trained and prepared. In order for Career and Technology Education programs to continue offering relevant and applicable training, the CTE Superintendent must have the specific skills needed to lead their district. If the Educational Leadership preparation experiences are not equipping these individuals for their future leadership roles, it could impact the quality of education received by high school students, adult students, and businesses across our state. Additionally, considering the role the Career Tech schools play in economic development within the state, the superintendents must have the visionary leadership to work with community partners in advancing the growth of business and industry.

Understanding the essential skills needed by CTE administrators, from supervisory level to the superintendent, is critical for their development as a leader. By ensuring the knowledge and skills provided through the graduate-level Educational Leadership programs are relevant, will provide a strong foundation for the individual's growth as a leader. The intentional effort to prepare the next generation of CTE Superintendents to meet the leadership demands of their local area, regardless of the challenges, will assist in providing the education and training needed for the students and businesses within the state.

**To Research**

This research provides a significant contribution to the limited existing data related to the preparation of CTE administrators. As identified by Clark and Cole (2015), a significant gap exists in the specific preparation skills that are needed by individuals who desire to become a CTE administrator or superintendent. The essential knowledge and skills for the type of educational institution, as well as the level of leadership, must be identified and implemented within the educational leadership preparation programs.

Utilizing the Skills Theory theoretical framework as a lens to analyze the research data has helped to identify the mastery of skills as individuals progress through the various administrative roles to become a CTE Superintendent. Based on the perceptions of the participants in this study, the preparation received through their Educational Leadership program and the identification of the needed skills in the role of a superintendent are instrumental in the future design and components of the graduate

degree programs for administrators.

**To Theory**

The Skills Theory, or more specifically the Three-Skill Approach by Katz (1955), is a model of leadership capacity development for educational leaders. The foundation of this theory lies on an individual's ability to develop the essential skills over the course of time for a leadership position. This study has added to the body of research for the Three-Skills Approach framework related to the technical, human, and conceptual skills needed for leaders within the CTE leadership role of a superintendent. The identification of the importance these skills, and more specifically how the exact skills identified by the CTE Superintendents can all be grouped within the three domains, has strengthened the support for the Three-Skill Approach.

Through the use of this theory, the preparation experiences of CTE administrators can be better aligned with their specific job responsibilities, and help ensure leaders have the foundation needed for their particular roles. The identification of the skills that can be developed through the Educational Leadership preparation experiences or through career experiences will create a more systematic and intentional approach to the leader's development. This research contributes valuable data for the support of this theory which can be utilized not only in the preparation of CTE Superintendents, but will ultimately impact the quality of education and training within the Career Tech schools.

## Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of CTE Superintendents related to how their Educational Leadership preparation programs

equipped them for leadership in a CTE school. This research study has assisted in revealing critical information in regard to the skill development of CTE administrators. Through the interviews and observations of the eight CTE Superintendents, along with the collection of relevant artifacts, the need for specific leadership skill development for CTE administrators became apparent.

More research needs to be conducted that would continue assisting in the identification of the technical, human, and conceptual skills needed in each phase of an administrator's journey from entry/supervisory level to senior/superintendent leadership. As demonstrated in the previous pages of this chapter, the interviewees perceived that Career Tech administrators need to be equipped with a strong foundation of the technical and human skills through the preparation programs for the type of educational institution they are desiring to lead. While commonalities may exist between public education and Career Tech Education, the specific skills for leadership must be further identified to ensure effective preparation.

Additionally, a systematic approach to develop CTE administrators should also be addressed. The curriculum and competencies within the Educational Leadership preparation programs should be examined to identify changes that would assist in the particular skill developments. The completion of the mandatory graduate degree programs for administrator licensure should ensure the individuals have a strong underpinning for the educational system they are preparing to lead. The Three-Skills Approach theory has assisted in identifying how the development of technical, human, and conceptual skills must continue throughout a leader's career. Therefore, additional research must also determine the most effective method to ensure the administrators are

being exposed to the needed professional development and professional experiences in order to develop these skills throughout their career as an educator.

In order to safeguard the Career Tech system in Oklahoma as being considered a model of CTE training within the country, the development of effective leadership must be addressed. Career Tech administrators need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills for their specific role of leadership. The findings of this study should serve as a catalyst to encourage further research within this sparsely studied area of educational leadership development.

## Conclusion

This research study has exposed findings that are not only beneficial to educational leaders who aspire to become a CTE Superintendent, but also to policymakers, higher education institutions, departments of education, and for those who seek to mentor new administrators. The design of this study was to explore the CTE Superintendents' perceptions related to their educational leadership preparation through personal interviews, observations, and the collection of related artifacts. Through the data analysis, noteworthy themes emerged that served as a collective articulation of the interviewees perceived experiences and needed skills for CTE leadership. The application of the Three-Skills Approach theory to leadership development allowed the data and themes to become applicable through the identification of the needed technical, human, and conceptual skills aligned with the career stages of development and utilization.

The findings of this research must not be concealed within the bindings of this dissertation research project, but instead become a springboard for other researchers and educational innovators to ensure every CTE administrator is properly prepared for their role of leadership. The training, recruitment, and retention of teachers within our schools has been heavily researched to ensure they are receiving the training and support needed for their roles. However, as for those educators who desire to lead in the role of an administrator, the same research, training, and professional support must be available.

Understanding the impact that administrators have upon the school culture and learning environments, the skill preparation of CTE Superintendents is essential to meet the education, training, and business growth needs of the state and country. The findings of this study, accompanied by further researcher, and the attention of other individuals equally concerned about the development of leaders to serve in administrative capacities in CTE schools can collectively initiate a needed change in the preparation protocols. Other occupations educate and train their professionals with the knowledge and skills that are essential for their field of expertise. We must likewise ensure that CTE administrators are being equipped with the technical, human, and conceptual skills for their roles in leading schools to educate students, training business and industry personnel, or assisting in the economic growth of our communities.

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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board

Dear Brent Casey,

The Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved the following application:

Application Number: ED-19-119
PI: Brent Casey
Title: Oklahoma Career Tech Superintendent's Perceptions of Educational Leadership Preparation Experiences
Review Level: Exempt

You will find a copy of your Approval Letter in IRBManager. Click IRB - Initial Submission to go directly to the event page. Please click attachments in the upper left of the screen. The approval letter is under "Generated Docs." Stamped recruitment and consent documents can also be found in this location under "Attachments". Only the approved versions of these documents may be used during the conduct of your research.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

- Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted for IRB approval before implementation.
- Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period.
- Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair within 5 days. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
- Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete by submitting a closure form via IRBManager.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Best of luck with your research,

Sincerely,

Dawnett Watkins, CIP
Whitney McAllister, MS

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Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board
Office of University Research Compliance
223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078
Website: https://irb.okstate.edu/
Ph: 405-744-3377 | Fax: 405-744-4335| irb@okstate.edu

Appendix B

**OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY**

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

## PROJECT TITLE

Oklahoma Career Tech Superintendent's Perceptions of Educational Leadership Preparation Experiences

## INVESTIGATOR

Brent Casey, Oklahoma State University Doctoral Candidate

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this research study is to explore Oklahoma Career Tech Superintendent's perceptions of their educational leadership preparation programs. Participants will be asked to voluntarily participate as a means of providing data to examine if current leadership preparation programs are providing the knowledge, skills and experiences need for CTE leadership.

## PROCEDURES

Superintendents will be asked to participate in a single interview lasting approximately one hour, that will be audio recorded. The researcher also requests time to observe you during a normal work day. During the interview, you will be asked about your educational leadership preparation experiences and if you believe you were adequately prepared to become a Career Tech Superintendent. A copy of the transcript will be provided to verify accuracy of comments. Researcher will also collect any artifacts that you would be willing to share related to your Educational Leadership Preparation, job descriptions, or other articles/documents you believe would aid in the research of this topic.

## RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

There are no known risks associated with this research project that would be considered any greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

**BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION**

The results of this study may be used to inform the leadership preparation program requirements in Oklahoma. If you would be interested, a copy of the study findings will be electronically sent to you.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

The data obtained throughout this study will be kept in a private and secure location. All written findings will only refer to the results of the group of interviewees, and will not include identifiable information about you. All audio recordings will be transcribed within a week of the interview, and the recordings will then be permanently destroyed. Interview transcripts will be kept for no more than two years, then will be destroyed. All research data will be stored on a password protected computer in a locked office, and only accessible by the researcher or individuals with research oversight responsibilities. All findings will be presented as an aggregate, without identifying you individually.

**COMPENSATION**

No compensation will be provided for your participation in the study.

**CONTACTS**

If you should desire to contact the researcher concerning your participation in the study or request information/results of the study, the following are the points of contact:

**Researcher**

Brent Casey
2013 Mesa Trail

Edmond, OK 73025

(405) 412-3731
brentlcasey@hotmail.com

**OSU Advisor**

Dr. Kathy Curry
306 Willard Hall

Stillwater, OK 74078

(918) 520-9217
katherine.curry@okstate.edu

**OSU IRB Office**

If you have questions concerning your rights as a volunteer in this research, you can contact the OSU IRB office at 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-3377, or irb@okstate.edu.

**PARTICIPANTS RIGHTS**

As a participant, I understand that I am voluntarily involved in this study, and there are not any penalties for refusal to participate. I have the right to withdraw my consent, research participation or responses at any time, without penalty.

**CONSENT DOCUMENTATION**

I have been fully informed about the research procedures outlined here, aware of what I will be asked to do as a part of this research, and the benefits of participation.
I have read and fully understand this consent form. I am signing it freely and voluntarily. I hereby give permission for my participation in the study and received a copy of this form.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting the participant to sign.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date

# Appendix C

## Interview Questions for Career Tech Superintendents

1) Why did you choose the field of education as your career?
2) Tell me about your experiences as an educator.
    a. How many years did you teach?
    b. What administrative positions have you held?
3) Describe your formal preparation experiences to become an administrator.
    a. What degrees or certifications did you earn?
4) What made you want to become a Superintendent of a Career Tech center?
5) From your preparation program, what are some of the most important knowledge and skills that you learned to help you to be who you are today?
6) How effective was this preparation program in preparing you for an administrative role in the CTE center?
7) Was there anything in the preparation program that prepared you to work with people?
8) How did this program prepare you with the knowledge and skills for the CTE setting?
9) How did the preparation program prepare you to further the mission and vision of your organization?
10) In what ways did your preparation program prepare you to become a CTE Superintendent?

11) If you were going to write a book about what they don't tell you in schools of educational leadership about preparation as a CTE administrator, what would you write?
12) How should future Career Tech Superintendents be prepared to meet the challenges they will face in their career?
    a. Are there specific skills or competencies that you believe are important in the development or preparation of these leaders?

VITA

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Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: OKLAHOMA CAREER TECH SUPERINTENDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION EXPERIENCES

Major Field: School Administration

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2020.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2001.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 1996

Experience:

Assistant Superintendent, Eastern Oklahoma County Technology Center, Choctaw, OK, 2018-2020
Director of Instruction/Operations, Eastern Oklahoma County Technology Center, Choctaw, OK, 2018-2020
Director of Operation, Meridian Technology Center, Stillwater, OK, 2002-2004
Agricultural Education Instructor, Mulhall-Orlando Public Schools, Orlando, OK, 1997-2000