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Principals' Leadership Role in Supporting Culturally Responsive English Language Learner Programs

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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by

Larry Cowger

EdS, Oakland University, 2008

MA, Benedictine College, 1999

BA, Central Michigan University, 1991

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

English language learners face different challenges in accessing relevant curriculum content compared to native English speakers. There is limited research on effective strategies that teachers use to ensure learning outcomes among English language learners. The purpose of this case study was to explore the leadership strategies that principals implement to support teachers' culturally responsive strategies when working with English language learning (ELL) students. Culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) was the basis of the conceptual framework, using research from Walker and five CRSL concepts. The research questions focused on school leadership and how administrators support teachers of ELL programs using CRSL. A case study research design was used to explore the study problem. Semistructured interview questions were used to collect relevant responses on the topic from seven school principals in schools located in the central region of the United States. Thematic data analysis revealed that school principals use various leadership strategies such as teamwork, situational leadership, servant leadership, and participatory leadership in leading their staff. To achieve adequate support for teachers, school principals encourage them to understand the background of their ELL students and their families. To ensure that teachers deliver culturally responsive ELL programs, school principals use classroom observations, interview teachers, and get feedback from parents. This research has positive implications for social change by providing school leaders with CRSL strategies and mindset to help ELL students increase equity and succeed in their schools. Future researchers may improve upon the current findings by recruiting a large and diverse sample, including parents, teachers, and students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The topic of this study is principals' leadership role in supporting culturally responsive English language learner (ELL) programs. The influx of ELL immigrants into U.S. schools presents new challenges to public education (Benner et al., 2017). Studies and state assessments consistently show that ELL students are underperforming academically. ELL students are more likely to drop out of school and not pursue postsecondary schooling (Benner et al., 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2018a). Flint et al. (2019) stressed the importance of quality ELL programs, focusing on literacy that embraces all cultures' home and native languages and values to succeed in school.

Background

Students with unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds add to the diversity and richness of school culture (Kotok & Dematthews, 2018). However, ELLs face numerous barriers to success in educational programs developed by and for native English speakers (Benner et al., 2017). These cultural barriers include ELLs not understanding the teacher's language or the cultural context in delivering the content (de Silva, 2018). ELLs face a twofold challenge in schools: learning the English language and mastering the academic content. Flint et al. (2019) noted the language barrier between students new to the country and teachers as a significant obstacle not to be underestimated.

Problem Statement

The local problem across K-12 buildings in an urban school district in the North Central United States is that principals struggle to support ELL teachers in implementing

culturally responsive strategies. Local evidence of this problem is that principals have requested numerous professional development sessions to help ELL teachers implement culturally responsive strategies.

Principals have also asked the district to hire an instructional coach or an English as a second language (ESL) coordinator to help teachers implement them. Eight school leaders have also left the district in the past 5 years, representing 40% of school leaders. These data represent a higher rate of principal turnover when compared with the national average of 21%. While there may be several reasons for teacher and principal turnover, often retention rates of principals coincide with frustration when tasked with supporting teachers with culturally responsive strategies according to local meeting minutes. Based on these requests, principals are likely to seek alternative resources because they may not be fully equipped with the skills necessary to support ELL teachers in their buildings using culturally responsive strategies.

Additionally, "45 percent of all public-school teacher turnover takes place in just one-fourth of public schools, with high-poverty, high-minority, urban, and rural schools experiencing the highest rates of turnover" (Ingersoll et al., 2018, p. 48). The teacher retention rate was 54% in this district, compared to the state average of 84% (Ingersoll et al., 2018, p. 48). Teacher turnover is just one reason for principals to support teachers of ESL students.

One urban school district in the North Central United States reported 67% of residents speaking a language other than English in the home, compared to the national average of 21% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). According to the U.S. Census Bureau

(2018), 42% of the residents in the city were foreign born in 2017, compared to a national average of 13%. Minkos et al. (2017) stated that there had been a lack of literature and minimal advancement in the area of culturally responsive school leadership and its influence on ELL programs for 3 decades. Given the changing classroom landscape, school leaders need an informed and empathetic understanding of their leadership role in educating ELLs and facilitating culturally responsive programs. There is a need to understand how principals view their leadership roles in supporting the implementation of successful, culturally responsive ELL programs (Minkos et al., 2017).

Based on meeting minutes collected from administrative cabinet meetings from the schools in this district, it has been shown that principals express a lack of confidence in their role of implementing and supporting teachers who teach ELL students. Furthermore, it is not understood how each principal supports teachers using culturally responsive strategies. How principals support teachers with culturally responsive strategies can be detrimental to teachers and ELL student success (Haj-Broussard et al., 2019). Meeting minutes also show that principals frequently request consultants and specialists to assist with ELL teaching strategies and need professional development for themselves on how to train teachers. This lack of confidence to lead and support teachers of ELL students is a reoccurring theme in administrative cabinet meetings with the principals in the schools in this district.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore the leadership strategies that the principals implement to support teachers' culturally responsive strategies when working

with ELL students. The research may contribute to an understanding of principals'

leadership strategies to support cultural competency and cultural responsiveness as well

as promote ELL student success. The study will explore the principal's leadership roles in

supporting culturally responsive ELL programs. The results will also contribute to filling

the literature gap regarding culturally responsive school leadership in schools.

Conceptual Framework

Culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) formed the basis of the

conceptual framework in this study. According to Walker (2019), CSRL is anchored on

five concepts: student-teacher relationships, teaching the whole child, developmental

appropriateness, equity and excellence, and identity and achievement. In the last three

decades, the increase of immigrant students has presented several challenges in American

schools (Kids Count Data Center, 2018). In the absence of culturally responsive school

programs (CRSP), a climate of forced assimilation and ostracism can create hardships for

ELL students (Toure & Thompson-Dorsey, 2018). Researcher Khalifa (2018) was

foundational in describing that quality ESL instruction requires culturally responsive

pedagogy and culturally responsive leadership. Georges (2020) defined culturally

responsive teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of

reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning

encounters more relevant and effective for them" (p. 31). Research by de Silva (2018)

described culturally responsive teaching and programs as those that "empower students

intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically because it uses cultural referents to

impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 20). Culturally responsive pedagogy

encompasses instructional strategies for diverse populations, instruction delivery, theory and practice, and teacher and student interactions. Culturally responsive pedagogy ncludes knowing about their culture and social and political background for ELL students.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is the act of teaching that involves consideration of the students' cultural context and how teaching and learning occur therein. A culturally responsive classroom invites all students and negates the alienation that diverse learners might otherwise experience. Besides having a culturally responsive classroom, teachers are charged with creating a welcoming classroom culture and a place where students respect one another and the learning environment. A culturally responsive teacher adds to the classroom culture, creating an environment where students feel known and valued. A culturally responsive teacher sees diversity as a strength and uses cultural referents to operate within the learner's context.

Manning et al. (2017) described three aspects of cultural responsiveness: institutional, personal, and instructional. The institutional dimension encompasses the school principal, school policies toward cultural responsiveness, and school culture. Munguia (2017) described the principal's vision and the collective mission of the school to address plurality and set the expectation for holistic ELL programming. The culturally responsive principal knows to celebrate each success as both the teacher and the learner make strides toward ELL achievement. The personal dimension represents how students and staff think and feel about the students and school. This includes the relationships built with students and staff (Munguia, 2017).

Principals' self-awareness toward implicit biases and understanding their background is critical to achieving instructional diversity in the curriculum, pedagogy, resources, and learning materials. Educators must reflect on their personal history and affiliations to specific groups in becoming more culturally responsive. Georges (2020) proposed that educators learn about their students' backgrounds and cultures and explore these communities to become more culturally responsive. It is not enough to appreciate diversity; a culturally responsive principal must adopt an antiracist perspective and work within the organization to change bias and values (Minkos et al., 2017).

Additionally, cultural responsiveness leads to students' feeling of having a voice and shaping their learning (de Silva, 2018). Minkos et al. (2017) stated that understanding culture comes from an interdisciplinary perspective incorporating sociology and cultural anthropology. They described schools as cultural contrast places where attitudes and beliefs clash, and adults help students seek understanding, respect, and harmony. Benner et al. (2017) defined the process of acculturation as a change in beliefs and values that is grounded in the concepts of cultural pluralism. Georges's (2020) research on cultural responsiveness indicated that leaders must possess and cultivate cultural self-awareness in others. This embodiment includes a critical consciousness focusing on social justice and community change. Benner et al. (2017) asserted that school principals need tools and skill sets to address ELL academic success barriers.

Munguia (2017) noted that little research had been conducted on the principal's role in ELL instruction. Haj-Broussard et al. (2019) added that principals often describe themselves as having very little expertise in ELL programs in their schools and offer all

credit for success to the teachers. Munguia identified the principal as the most critical person in sustaining long-term impact on ELL programming. The educational system needs to help school leaders embrace their own culture and the culture of the students whom they are serving. The principal's consideration of student culture can help school leaders develop more empathy for ELLs and give a broader lens to facilitate successful ELL programs and services. Minkos et al. (2017) stated that little advancement has occurred in the area of culturally responsive school leadership. According to Khalifa (2018), "school leadership is a crucial component to any reform of education, secondary only to the very act of teaching" (p. 1273). Pecina and Marx (2019) stated that social justice and culturally responsive school leadership provide a framework for emerging, diverse schools.

Viloria (2019) identified successful and culturally responsive leaders as those who build cultural competencies in teachers and develop and monitor ELL programs and policies. Khalifa et al. (2018) described the culturally responsive leader as focusing on the entire school environment with critical self-awareness and advocating for inclusion and social justice. A leader with a social justice perspective notices that economically disadvantaged students, students of color, and ELL students are not equally represented or educated relative to their peers (Sun, 2019) and challenges this situation.

Research Question

The following research question was based on CRSL and how the leader supports teachers of ELL programs: How do school leaders at the local research site support

teachers of English language learners to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies?

Methodology and Overall Design

This research was a case study to gather information using the constructivist approach (Creswell, 2017). The case study research design used an interpretive paradigm for making meaning using interviews, observations, and surveys (Creswell, 2017). A case study design was selected for this study to allow for open-ended questioning and exploring the themes with school leaders' experiences. Case studies allow researchers to interpret participants' perceptions and experiences while identifying patterns and themes (Yin, 2017).

Case study methods, such as interviews, were appropriate for this research study because they enable participants to share their perspectives and experiences about research questions more robustly (Yin, 2017). Semistructured interviews provide the researcher with case study data to analyze with an interpretive lens (Yin, 2017). The interviews in this study allowed the principals to share their personal and professional learning experiences that may have contributed to their leadership role in supporting teachers who teach ELL students (Newcomer & Cowin, 2018). Between 8 and 12 school principals from four schools that enrolled ELL students in a state in the Central United States were invited to participate in interviews. Interviews are a consistent case study design method and facilitated understanding culturally responsive school leadership (Yin, 2017).

These findings came through semistructured, one-on-one interviews with school

principals about their leadership role concerning strategies for supporting teachers who teach ELL students in their schools. Administrator interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded, and themes were generated to make sense of data. These research findings may elevate the importance of leader preparation, professional development, and successes leading to culturally responsive school leadership practices. The implications of this research may also help school leader preparation programs design more formalized approaches to cultivating culturally responsive school leaders.

Analysis

Obtained data from the interview responses were transcribed and coded through open coding. Subsequently, the thematic analysis was conducted to identify the main themes emerging from the study. The six-step thematic analysis process by Braun and Clarke (2019) was used to determine the key themes related to the topic based on CSRL framework constructs such as student-teacher relationships, developmental appropriateness, equity and excellence, and identity and achievement. The analyzed data were reported and discussed by comparing insights from past studies, research questions, and the CSRL conceptual framework.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Undertaking this study was essential in filling the knowledge gap identified in the literature and creating new knowledge on the topic. First, the surveyed literature shows a paucity of research on the leadership strategies that principals implement to support teachers' culturally responsive strategies when working with ELL students. Therefore, insights from this study may create new knowledge to contribute to an understanding of

the leadership strategies that principals use to facilitate key learning concepts such as cultural competency, cultural responsiveness, and promoting ELL student success. Second, local meeting minutes showed that principals' leadership role in ELL settings remains unclear and unspecified. As a result, there is a lack of dedicated programs in most schools for supporting ELL instructors. In conducting this study, I assessed and attempted to identify principals' leadership roles and obligations in supporting culturally responsive ELL initiatives. I hope that the findings will fill the knowledge gap in the extant literature regarding school leaders' responsibilities in enhancing culturally responsive school leadership.

Definitions

Cultural competency: Toure and Thompson-Dorsey (2018) defined cultural competency as the ability of school leaders to effectively deliver education and learning goals that meet students' linguistic, cultural, and social needs.

Culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL): CRSL is a foundational work on how leaders and teachers should engage with communities, families, and students to empower them by eliminating actors that result in their exclusion and oppression in current education structures and systems (Georges, 2020).

Cultural responsiveness: Hoover and Soltero-González (2018) defined cultural responsiveness as the ability to relate to and learn from people of an individual's own culture and those from other cultures.

Culturally responsive teaching: This is a teaching process that makes meaningful connections between what students learn in school and their languages, life experiences,

and cultures (Georges, 2020). Established connections assist learners in achieving a rigorous curriculum, attaining higher level academic skills, and appreciating the relevance of what they learn in school settings to their lives (Borg, 2018; Georges, 2020).

English language learners (ELLs): Students who are learning the English language and their native language or other languages that they may speak (Munguia, 2017).

Assumptions

According to Ghauri et al. (2020), assumptions are general perceptions considered accurate even without proof. In this study, I assumed that school principals who participated were not deceptive in their interview responses. The assumption was that participants answered questions honestly and to the best of their ability. Mason (2017) reported that participants have the right to respond or not to respond to questions during the data collection process. Therefore, the primary approach involved the assumption that the same voluntary approach was replicated when answering interview questions based on an individual's will to participate in the study. I also believe that the study accurately represented principals' leadership roles in supporting culturally responsive ELL programs, thereby helping identify potential challenges while formulating solutions for the identified problems.

Scope and Delimitations

The current study was delimited to schools offering ELL curriculum located in the North Central region of the United States. Thus, this study was delimited to schools in the United States where the primary focus was on ELL programs. Moreover, the study was

delimited to the participants who would take part in this study, focusing only on school principals. In elaboration, teachers, students, and parents were not recruited into this study because the focus was on obtaining expert leaders' opinions regarding principals' leadership roles in supporting culturally responsive learning in ELL settings. Therefore, the study was delimited to school leaders and those who work in schools that offer ELL programs. Because the study was delimited to the United States, the obtained information will likely apply to ELL schools in this county. Considering the small sample size in the study, the results may not be generalized to other contexts outside the immediate research scope.

Limitations

The study's potential limitations were related to the design and research methods used. Data for this study were collected through interviews with seven principals. Ghauri et al. (2020) noted that case studies use a small sample size, making it difficult to generalize findings to other settings. Lack of data triangulation also affects the study outcomes because the nonnumerical data only capture participants' feelings, opinions, and perceptions about the topic. Using focus group discussions, archival data, and quantitative surveys may have addressed this limitation. Using purposive sampling to recruit participants also introduced potential limitations such as vulnerability to my judgment errors (Mason, 2017).

Summary

Chapter 1 included the background for the study. Insights from past studies show that school principals in K-12 urban school districts in the North Central United States

struggle to support ELL teachers in implementing culturally responsive strategies. As a

result, principals have requested numerous professional development sessions to help

ELL teachers implement culturally responsive strategies. Therefore, the purpose of this

case study was to explore the leadership strategies that principals implement to support

teachers' culturally responsive strategies when working with ELL students. Moreover, I

detailed the problem statement that motivated the need for this study, formulated the

primary research question, and outlined the conceptual framework. Further, the nature of

the case study was elaborated, in addition to the definition of terms, assumptions,

delimitations, and significance of the study. In the next chapter, I present a literature

synthesis of past studies on culturally responsive strategies in ELL programs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this case study was to explore the leadership strategies that principals implement to support teachers' culturally responsive strategies when working with ELL students. In the literature review, I examine past studies and synthesize critical themes related to culturally responsive strategies within the ELL curriculum. Further, I examine how principal leadership strategies may facilitate ELL students' academic performance and achievement. From insights in the explored literature, I show that equal student opportunity to learn and access education is one of the most valued educational requirements in a free and egalitarian society (Callahan et al., 2019). While exploring equitable access for high school ELL students, Callahan et al. (2019) found that access to education offers its recipients improved life skills and competency. However, the notion that a one-size-fits-all approach is appropriate for ELL students equally hinders effective learning outcomes due to diversity in student needs and learning goals (Callahan et al., 2019).

Literature Search Strategy

Desktop research was conducted to identify relevant secondary sources for the study. Resources used in this review were retrieved from online academic journal articles. Key academic databases that were used to identify the studies included Google Scholar, Science Direct, EBSCOhost, ERIC, Semantic Scholar, and International Journals of Educational Research. Elaborate inclusion and exclusion criteria were adopted to retrieve peer-reviewed journals published within the last 5 years (i.e., between 2017 and 2021). However, high-impact journals that have been cited by several educational researchers

and published before 2017 were also included in the study. In addition, original studies

on theoretical backgrounds published before 2017 were included to provide a historical

perspective on theory development.

Additionally, the included studies were peer reviewed and published in English.

Opinion articles and editorials were excluded from the analysis. Seminal works were

included in the study to give theoretical underpinnings and justification. Additionally, an

elaborate search criterion was adopted using relevant keywords, including the use of

Boolean operators: "principal leadership strategies" AND "support teachers" AND

"cultural responsiveness" AND "English Language Learners." Additional keywords used

in the search strategy included "leadership strategies" AND "cultural competency" AND

"cultural responsiveness" AND "attaining ELL student success." Extracted studies were

subsequently used to synthesize the current research topic on issues related to school

directors' support for ESL teachers' professional development needs.

Literature Review Related to Culturally Responsive Strategies

and English Language Learners

This chapter is organized by the following themes, based on nine common issues

discussed from past studies. These themes are (a) culturally responsive school leadership

(CRSL) conceptual framework, (b) educational leadership preparation, (c) historical

reforms of educational leadership programs, (d) preparing school leaders for ELL

programs, (e) working with ELLs, (f) culturally responsive education, (g) principal

leadership strategies, (h) challenges and barriers to effective principal leadership, and (i)

literature knowledge gap. I conclude by summarizing the main findings from past studies

on culturally responsive leadership practices among school principals.

Conceptual Framework

CRSL formed the conceptual framework for this study. The CRSL conceptual framework was developed based on culturally relevant teaching postulated by Georges (2020). According to Walker (2019), culturally responsive leadership is anchored on five concepts: student-teacher relationships, teaching the whole child, developmental appropriateness, equity and excellence, and identity and achievement. According to Kibler et al. (2019), the framework of culturally responsive leadership based on these five themes helps in understanding how principals empower diverse students and their families while making English curricula more multicultural

As shown in Figure 1, the first CRSL theme focuses on the relationship between students and the teacher within the classroom setting. Key concepts associated with the student-teacher relationship include the nature of the interaction, association, collaboration, caring, and classroom climate. Almaguer (2019) shared that principals have a significant role in facilitating positive student-teacher relationships in school, considering that the nature and extent of collaboration between learners and tutors are central to promoting learning. The teacher is a significant other in students' lives because of the amount of time that learners spend in school (Kibler et al., 2019).

Students from diverse cultural backgrounds need to know that their principals care and that teachers recognize and respect the diversity of their students. Further, students need to be recognized for their different values, morals, and beliefs reflective of their own cultures. With this recognition, positive recognition from school leaders and

students of diversity enhances the student-teacher relationship, which is crucial to learning (Msemgi, 2021).

Kibler et al. (2019) observed that student-teacher relationships are fluid and equitable and extend outside the classroom. Culturally relevant principals and school leaders demonstrate a strong sense of connectedness between students and teachers and encourage similar collaboration among diverse students from different backgrounds. Khalifa (2018) observed that school principals should not limit their cultural responsiveness to individual student-teacher values and beliefs but also consciously appreciate what they share in common. In the process, strong teacher-student collaboration results in the classroom community, making it a safe place to nurture everyone's linguistic and cultural identities (Lee et al., 2019). Leithwood et al. (2019) shared that culturally sensitive principals ensure that teachers expand their classrooms to be inclusive of diverse student populations through collaborations with parents, students, and colleagues. These insights show that culturally responsive school principals are more likely to facilitate ELL student success when building positive teacher-student relationships.

Closely connected to successful ELL programs is teaching a culturally diverse curriculum. Major concepts relevant to ensuring that ELL learners have access to a culturally diverse curriculum include empowerment, supportive learning community, learning outcomes, home-school-society collaboration, and cultural context. School principals who attempt to achieve the goal of practicing CRSL must remember that the needs and goals of the students in the class may differ. Individual influences from initial

cultural socialization in the community and family shape students' learning outcomes when entering culturally diverse classrooms (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). These cultural influences impact how learners perceive, categorize, respond to, and prioritize in relation to their academic goals (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Therefore, principals must be sensitive to how ethnicity, race, and culture may influence ELL students' emotional, social, academic, and psychological development to implement culturally responsive leadership effectively.

Koonce et al. (2019) researched principal engagement in professional development and providing leadership in the school. Insights from case study interview sessions with school principals revealed that culturally responsible principals affirm that cultural diversity resides in students. Although students may be guided in different ways in line with cultural group identification, Koonce et al. noted that individual students' ways of perceiving and believing may also be influenced by particular learner conceptualizations and understandings of the type of curriculum that they are exposed to in the classroom. Therefore, principals should not solely base their approaches to ELL facilitation on individual group culture because such beliefs may be stereotypical. According to Keung et al. (2019), effectively teaching the whole child (i.e., supporting and nurturing all areas of children's development and learning—from social-emotional and cognitive skills to literacy, math, and science understanding) about the culturally relevant curriculum will require that school principals understand, recognize, and acknowledge both cultural group behaviors and individual student perceptions. In this case, effective instruction delivery to ELL students would be influenced by how skilled

teachers can learn about individual students, especially learners from a culture different from the teacher's culture.

Walker (2019) shared that developmental appropriateness includes concepts such as teaching style, learning style, and differences in student psychological needs such as collaboration, engagement, morale, and motivation. In relation to ELL student success, school principals need to know where students are in their psychological and cognitive development (Kerry, 2018). Successful implementation of culturally responsive leadership largely depends on principals' ability to recognize students' levels of learning development and believe that learners will continue to advance their skills as they move to higher grades (Wright-Odusoga, 2020). In advancing developmental appropriateness, school principals should be interested in what is culturally relevant and appropriate for culturally diverse learners in their schools. Lochmiller and Cunningham (2019) elaborated that the productive skills and knowledge that students bring into school need to be examined, acknowledged, and utilized.

Moreover, school principals need to ensure that their approach toward developmental appropriateness identifies the competency level when leaders enter school or whether it may be a direct remnant of societal stereotypes and prejudice (Heineke et al., 2019). For instance, ELL students may already believe that the educational system is stacked against them, contributing to defeatist perceptions throughout their learning endeavors. Such students may have also experienced negative stereotypes that devalued their worth as ELL learners due to culture, ethnicity, or race, making it difficult to achieve academically. Culturally responsive leadership ensures that students develop

appropriate ELL concepts that improve their current and future academic competencies

(Kerry, 2018; Kibler et al., 2019). Not only should principals ensure developmental

appropriateness to help students achieve social, emotional, psychological, and cognitive

needs, but they should also focus on integrating student learning styles and teaching

styles (Kibler et al., 2019). Essentially, principals need to appreciate that the

psychological needs of ELL students vary and that students have various motivations to

learn. The critical approach is to develop teaching styles that integrate the vast

differences in ELL students' culturally based learning preferences and styles.

In relation to ELL students, equity and excellence incorporate multicultural

content in pedagogy instruction and curriculum. Often, ELL students do not perceive

themselves positively when exposed to the traditional material usually presented in the

classroom. Lochmiller and Cunningham (2019) observed that ELL students are exposed

to learning processes that reflect native language learners in teaching and curriculum

textbooks and units. By contrast, the perspectives of second language learners or foreign

language learners are frequently ignored or marginalized. Such instruction delivery

marginalizes ELL students while privileging native language learners, resulting in a lack

of belonging among ELL learners. Culturally responsive school principals must ensure

that the content of the English curriculum is inclusive of all cultures represented in the

classroom. Nonetheless, Lochmiller and Cunningham cautioned that acknowledgment of

cultural, ethnic, or racial differences should not be reduced to symbolic, simplistic, and

meaningless tasks such as reading folktales, singing and dancing, and eating ethnic or

cultural foods. Instead, the acknowledgment should include bringing faculty and students

from different cultures into the academic environment, where principals maintain high expectations of students' academic success.

According to Kerry (2019), different concepts are aligned with identity and achievement. These concepts include the affirmation of diversity, multiple perspectives, cultural heritage, identity development, and public validation of community and home cultures that include the cultural and social capital that learners bring to school. School leaders need to realize that ELL students who are members of ethnic or racial minority groups view, see, or perceive themselves and others differently from native English-speaking students. Heineke et al. (2019) shared that considering that race is visual and often perceived as a determinant of intelligence, principals should understand their biases when facilitating culturally responsive learning. For school principals to be culturally attuned to the identity of ELL students, they need to be aware of their identities and how those identities may be divergent from those of students.

Heineke et al. (2019) shared that when school principals reconnect with their background and potential triumphs and sufferings of their own families, they may be able to lay the groundwork for culturally diverse students to reclaim their voices and histories in the classroom. Principals can promote identity and classroom achievement by creating a responsive culture through curriculum and programs. Achievement occurs when principals integrate students' culture with pedagogical techniques that lead to effective instructional delivery measures that raise the academic performance of ELL students. School principals who facilitate culturally responsive pedagogy recognize that education potentially provides teachers with tools to empower students while strengthening cultural

diversity in the classroom (Easton-Brooks et al., 2018; Kerry, 2019). In summation, the CRSL framework provides essential practices and strategies that principals need to consider in supporting the success of ELL students.

Educational Leadership Preparation Programs

Growing changes in student demographics, accountability structure, and overall educational demands necessitate competent principals equipped with the skills and tools to achieve dynamic school functions and meet diverse student needs. Zwicky and Walls (2020) investigated the impact of the multicultural curriculum in transforming pedagogy and conscious curriculum delivery in the modern education sector in K-12 schools. They explored how two university faculties leveraged pedagogies and critical theories to engage action grounded in theories of critical pedagogy, necessary multicultural education, and educational leadership. Insights from the two university faculties emphasized the need to prepare educators and school leaders with skills and knowledge to teach and implement equity and justice in culturally diverse schools (Zwicky & Walls, 2020). These findings stress potential challenges in leadership preparation programs among school principals due to limitations of educational leadership curricula.

Easton-Brooks et al. (2018) investigated school leadership practice and preparation in culturally responsive practices and instructional leadership. This study used a case study research method to collect data from school principals using semistructured interview questions and focus group discussions. Results from 17 responses collected from middle and high school principals showed that existing leadership preparation programs are inadequate in addressing ethnicity, sexual

orientation, race, and cultural diversity among school leaders. As a result, school

principals cannot facilitate the implementation of culturally responsive practices in their

schools, thereby creating a climate where some students are exposed to educational

disadvantage (Easton-Brooks et al., 2018). Similar observations were made by Burns et

al. (2019), who conducted a quantitative study on potential leadership challenges that

school principals encounter in navigating the terrain of academe. Survey findings from

261 school leaders showed that about 52% of principals lacked adequate preparation for

culturally diverse educational leadership. Specifically, these school leaders lacked the

training to promote their desire to facilitate and practice social justice (Burns et al.,

2019). These findings show that preservice professional development or training fails to

provide aspiring school leaders with all relevant knowledge needed to be effective

principals in culturally diverse school settings.

DeMatthews and Izquierdo (2018) investigated leadership approaches school

leaders use to support Mexican immigrant students on the border. Case study interviews

from 13 school leaders who included teachers, principals, deputy principals, and mentors

showed that effective leadership preparation programs determine the effectiveness of

support programs for Mexican American immigrant learners, primarily through culturally

responsive leadership in a dual language elementary school (DeMatthews & Izquierdo).

These findings echo observations made by Easton-Brooks et al. (2018) and Zwicky and

Walls (2020). Leadership preparation programs contribute to developing principals who

have skills, attributes, and knowledge of culturally responsive leadership that can

galvanize accelerated student learning and achievement. Easton-Brooks et al. remarked

that educational leadership preparation often marks the difference in student success, significantly when school leaders acquire insights on the importance of avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach to instructional delivery. DeMatthews and Izquierdo cautioned that instead of using failed and outmoded educational methods to prepare school leaders, institutions of higher learning need to create new types of leadership training programs embedded in cultural, social, and moral leadership to achieve the dynamic needs of culturally diverse students through equity and social justice.

In the light of the sweeping changes in society's cultural and racial demographics, Evans et al. (2019) advocated the need for schools to reflect the community in which they are situated to meet the myriad cultures that permeate schools. These findings have been reflected in past studies where a growing body of literature continues to criticize the status quo of school pedagogy, curriculum, and leadership, terming them major impediments to meeting the changing societal needs (Freeman, 2017; ; Heck & Chang, 2017; Palmer & Palmer, 2018). According to Alsliman (2020), leadership change is a fundamental approach to creating culturally inclusive schools that meet the changing needs of diverse, multiethnic, and multilingual societies. Further, Callahan et al. (2019) noted that being open systems, schools in a racially diverse community need leaders and new models of leadership that will address the changing ethnic, cultural, racial, and linguistic composition of their respective societies. For instance, as of 2019, ELL students constitute about 30% of the total student population (Mavrogordato & White, 2020). Therefore, focusing on culturally diverse classrooms is essential in educational leadership, given the rapidly increasing number of ELL students.

Underwriting the above considerations, the purpose of the proposed case study is to explore the leadership strategies that the principals implement to support teachers' culturally responsive strategies when working with English Language Learning (ELL) students. Undertaking the current study is key to examining effective leadership strategies that principals use to facilitate cultural responsiveness in their schools, support cultural competency, and promote ELL student success. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Act 2015, educators are faced with the challenge to close the achievement gap between native and non-native English learners (Mady & Masson, 2018; Palmer & Palmer, 2018). The achievement of ELL students is a concern for school principals as stringent and higher school accountability requirements increase (Palmer & Palmer, 2018). Underlying these considerations (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018; Driver & Powell, 2017; Msengi, 2021; Moore, 2018; Parkhouse et al. 2019), the current literature research focuses on past studies on culturally responsive leadership practices and leadership strategies principals use to support the success of ELL students.

Culturally responsive leadership strengthens school principals' attributes, skills, and knowledge (Driver & Powell, 2017; Heineke & Papola-Ellis et al., 2018; Park et al., 2019). For example, a case study by Portes et al. (2018) investigated culturally responsive teaching outcomes for diverse learners in elementary school. A key theme identified from case study data from ten school leaders was that preparation programs ensure principals prepare to become culturally responsive and are more likely to facilitate higher student achievement. The culturally responsive aspect of adequately prepared principals prepares them to assess the existing situation of their educational settings. It uses the assessment to

determine effective strategies to facilitate social justice in culturally diverse schools (Portes). Leadership preparation programs also prepare culturally responsive school principals to constantly be aware of the dynamic nature of their school environment. Being aware of the school setting allows principals to meet individual student needs in a multicultural school environment.

Historical Reforms of Educational Leadership Programs

Several changes have been initiated to modify how educational leaders are prepared in the past four decades. A review by Scanlan et al. (2020) elaborated that in the 1980s, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) and the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) recommended educational preparation programs to promote effective leadership development programs. Both the NPBEA and NCEE advocated the increase in the sequencing of program content and aligning leadership programs to meet the job demands among school principals. However, Scanlan et al. observed that these bodies failed to emphasize the need to develop culturally responsive programs to meet the needs of culturally diverse learners. Most focus was on career development, skills development, and knowledge on managing students and leading teachers to meet diverse student needs (Scanlan).

Additional efforts to improve educational leaders' content and program needs were undertaken by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in 1996. Specifically, the CCSSO advanced the set of standards through the Interstate School Leaders Consortium (ISLLC) that created a framework for leader preparation in 40 states (Hoover & Soltero-González, 2018; Scanlan et al., 2020). These standards were adopted

in 2002 by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in the accreditation of school leadership training and professional development programs (Zorba, 2020). Nonetheless, Hoover and Soltero-González elaborated that while ISLLC standards received acclaim for promoting leadership training based on student needs and effective leadership practices, the standards received criticism. For instance, there were concerns that the measures failed to address social justice issues adequately and did very little to ensure school principals were adequately trained on facilitating culturally responsive leadership practices in their schools (Hoover & Soltero-González; Scanlan et al.).

To overcome these initial challenges, efforts have been made to ensure school principals receive culturally relevant training to meet the growing changes of diverse student groups. According to Heineke et al. (2019), updated standards were released in 2018 by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration under the Educational Leadership Policy Standards. These standards focused on ensuring that school leaders received leadership training on social justice, the key to achieving equity, and facilitating culturally responsive training to meet changing needs in schools. Auslander (2018) investigated how educational leaders may receive training to achieve linguistically and culturally responsive classrooms. Researchers conducted a case study design on high school leaders, including counselors and teachers. Results showed that counselors and teachers agreed that culturally competent school principals effectively built culturally and linguistically responsive classrooms. These findings further demonstrate the effectiveness of reforms to educational leadership programs.

Georges (2020) conducted an assessment of educational administration and leadership programs. They noted that despite the reforms that have been undertaken in the last four decades, there is a slight connection between what school leaders are being taught and the existing culturally diverse settings in the modern school landscape. Portes et al. (2018) also raised concerns that existing educational leadership programs are focused on traditional approaches to school leadership with an emphasis on curriculum delivery in line with academic policies. Further, educational leadership programs over the years have focused on performance-related outcomes based on examination scores, with limited focus on individual student skills acquisition. Thus, Georges and Portes et al. found that most programs are not meeting the dynamic needs of school leaders. Effective leadership training programs are needed considering competent school leaders play a central part in facilitating school reforms to eliminate potential challenges that might occur when the inadequacies of preparation programs fail to meet the current needs of culturally diverse students and school settings (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018; Scanlan et al., 2020).

Preparing School Leaders for English Language Learner Programs

Considering the potential limitations of existing leadership development programs, there is a need for continuous reforms on principal training and professional development. Hoover and Soltero-González (2018) noted that the school principal or leader is key to the academic achievement of English learners, especially ELL students. A growing body of literature has shown that school principals are essential in ensuring ELL student success in teaching and learning (Lopez, 2020; Callahan et al., 2019;

Cassady et al., 2018). However, research interest has primarily been limited to the principal's role in running school programs, with minimal research interest on school leaders' role concerning ELL student success (Daniel et al., 2018; Doabler et al., 2019). A literature review by De Araujo et al. (2018) reported the need to promote culturally responsive learning, close the achievement gap between native English students and ELL learners, and reduce drop-out rates among ELL learners places a new emphasis on preparing both new and culturally responsive and experienced school leaders.

Doable et al. (2019) noted that ELL students are the fastest-growing student population in American public schools. To examine factors that impact the success of these students, Doabler et al. conducted secondary research using past literature publications on the topic to assess the preparation of special educators, school leaders, and allocation to relevant resources to facilitate ELL success. Results showed that mounting scholarly and practitioner evidence on the topic suggests that ELL students do not benefit from explicit and systematic instruction. Further, the currently available research on ELL students shows leadership programs on this topic are less developed. Insights by Doabler et al. represent a logical starting point on filling the shortage in school leader capacity to meet the needs of ELL students. Specifically, leadership preparation needs to ensure the role of the school principal shifts to focus on culturally diverse instruction, learning, and support for inclusive practices to meet the different needs of ELL students.

Driver and Powell (2017) investigated how leaders may facilitate culturally and linguistically responsive schema intervention in their schools. Case study research on 14

school leaders was conducted to assess success factors in improving word problem solving for ELL students with mathematics difficulty. Results from the interview responses showed that principals are essential in developing ELL students, setting curriculum and pedagogy direction, and creating goals for teachers to meet the learning needs of ELL students. Even if teachers remain crucial to student achievement due to their direct interaction with students, principals are the prominent individuals who stand out are change agents in influencing the long-term success of learning programs for ELL students (Driver & Powell).

Howley et al. (2019) conducted a quasi-experimental study to examine whether a statewide professional development program for school principals yields measurable changes in self-reported practices and attitudes. Fifty-six participating principals and 56 non-participating principals participated in a two-year training program drawn from central and regional locations. The program examined the change in attitude towards cultural inclusiveness, understanding of social justice, and training principals to cultivate inclusive instructional leadership. The program included a leadership approach towards students with disabilities, ELL learners, and students of color. Results showed a statistically significant effect between treatment and control groups (Howley).

Preparation Programs for English Language Learner Students

Insights by Howley et al. (2019) showed the process of training principals is critical to addressing individual shortcomings and clarifying accountability standards and measures of effective culturally responsive leaders. Similar observations have been made by Driver and Powell (2017), where leaders who receive training tend to show a positive

attitude and practice towards facilitating the learning experience of ELL students. Further, principals should be well equipped as culturally responsive leaders and ensure continuous training to become culturally competent in dealing with ELL students. Training would help principals facilitate tailored instruction for students while becoming conscious about their dispositions that may impact their culturally responsive leadership performance when supporting teachers to achieve ELL student success.

Regarding ELL student performance, state accountability measures have focused on teachers' attention on student learning. Also, leadership accountability has been facilitated by developing pedagogy and curriculum by native English educators for native English students with limited focus on non-native and ELL students (Freeman, 2017; Heck & Chang, 2017; Palmer and Palmer, 2018;). A key concern is that accountability standards place student achievement in English learning at the program's center when preparing and accrediting school principals. Another consideration when assessing school principal competency is successfully completing credit hours. Once the course is complete, the principal preparation program requires school leaders to sit for examinations that link leadership preparation to the applicants' performance on the state assessment tests (Palmer & Palmer). However, these programs have limited curricula content on how principals should approach and support students from culturally diverse settings.

Addressing these concerns would require leadership preparation programs that are exemplary in supporting the needs of ELL students. In terms of preparing school leaders for ELL students, Khalifa (2018) noted that these programs need to:

- Be well-defined and anchored on culturally responsive school leadership,

- Be developed based on a coherent curriculum that addresses effective culturally responsive leadership, school development, and change management aligned with culturally responsive professional standards,

- Use active learning strategies that simultaneously integrate practice, theory and stimulate student reflection about culture,

- Quality skills on applying leadership skills and knowledge to support teacher initiatives to teaching and instruction delivery in culturally diverse classrooms

- Use teaching and learning standards focused on meeting student needs through continuous improvement tied to ELL program objectives and vision (Khalifa, 2018).

In addition to effective programs for leadership development, exemplary preparation programs for ELL students must include programs focused on providing experiences to develop cultural proficiency for prospective educational leaders (Portes et al., 2018). Also, the programs should be designed in a manner that enables teachers to identify personal beliefs about ability, gender, class, race, ethnicity, and other cultural elements, such as privilege accorded to native English language learners or dominant cultures, to enable school leaders to create programs to address such preconceptions when supporting teacher initiatives towards ELL student success.

Working with English Language Learners

Educational leadership practices are often anchored on standards created to facilitate participatory, instructional, and managerial leadership. According to Dong

(2019), cultural responsiveness in the classroom promotes educational equity among second language learners, especially among ELL students. Nonetheless, a key hurdle is that diversity in principal leadership approaches and practices is hardly adhered to in most schools, as teachers often follow a standardized curriculum (Dong, 2019). Also, achieving diversity in most schools across the United States is challenging. Approximately 84% of the school principals are White (NCES, 2019), and these principals lack knowledge about culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy (Dong).

Considering limited knowledge about culturally responsive leadership, Clayton et al. (2019) observed that school principals often embrace diverse leadership practices and approaches when dealing with ELL students. Despite their inadequate skills and overreliance on traditional teaching methods and leadership practices, there is a need for modern school leadership to adhere to management approaches that meet their students' diverse cultural and social needs. CRSL suggests that school leaders must create environments that allow teachers and students to embrace skills essential in addressing emerging challenges that second language learners encounter in their daily learning environments. Khalifa (2018) that school principals are integral to learning and teaching.

Jae-Bum (2017) alluded that school principals are empowered and responsible for shaping the environment where students learn and influence the teaching process. Principals committed to the success of ELL students create a school culture that is focused on learning, while teachers have high expectations for every student. According to Easton-Brooks et al. (2018), school principals who are color-conscious are receptive to leadership practices and approaches characterized by implementing a culturally relevant

and responsive curriculum. For example, school leadership practices that are color-conscious facilitate several aspects when dealing with ELL students. For example, school leadership works towards the need to address intercultural contact between diverse students and put measures on navigating between cultures while maintaining their own identities.

Also, they create intercultural relations focused on strong leadership in response to the needs of the schooling community (Easton-Brooks et al., 2018). Moreover, culturally responsive practices rotate between cultures within the school and create understanding among groups and between processes (Jae-Bum, 2017). A case study by de Lourdes (2019) sought to present culturally responsive leadership practices to assist school leaders in achieving rigorous accountability based on teacher self-efficacy and a culturally responsive curriculum. Insights from 12 South Texas elementary schools teachers showed that school leadership approaches inform successful teacher preparedness to facilitate ELL instruction and promote culturally responsive practices. Further research of past literature identifies critical themes that largely align with culturally responsive leadership practices and approaches, including the nature of leadership preparation, the standard of leadership approaches, instructional, transformative, and inclusive leadership practices.

Instructional Leadership Practices

Aas and Paulsen (2019) defined instructional leadership as the school principals' management of curriculum and instruction. The leadership practice postulates that the key to the successful running of schools lies in the leadership role of the principals. Aas

and Paulsen (2019) agree that school principals' direct and indirect instructional behavior significantly impacts teacher instruction and subsequently affects student learning. These insights show a strong connection between school principal leadership practices, teaching, and education (Aas & Paulsen). Harris et al. (2017) explored principals' instructional leadership practices in Nevada and compared the implications and insights of their leadership practices. Results revealed that school leadership that realizes their institutions are situated in broader social and political settings become aware of how systematic policies and practices of racism hinder effective educational reforms and academic performance among students of color (Harris et al.). Such principals are likely to eliminate standardized curriculum and ensure it reflects the diverse needs of its unique student demographics.

Miller et al. (2019) investigated potential leadership practices regarding instructional coaching and how school principals navigate the complexities of leadership. Results from New York public schools showed that instructional leadership practices among school leadership are still based on traditional assumptions of blending supervision, curriculum development, and staff development. Nonetheless, effective instructional leadership requires that leaders identify culturally competent teachers to facilitate social justice and ensure developed curriculum or instructions meet the needs of every learner. Specifically, Miller et al. observed that instructional leaders who identify specific pedagogy and curriculum promote cultural aspects aligned to learners' needs and recognize what relevant instruction must entail for students of color.

A case study by Smith et al. (2019) further examined teacher evaluation and

instructional practice among secondary school teachers in Alabama. Responses collected

from interview feedback revealed that effective instructional leaders embrace the

obligation of leading their schools in rethinking their curriculum, priorities, goals,

assessment methods, and learning resources. Therefore, effective leaders are committed

to designing classroom environments that allow everyone to learn relevant skills

necessary to overcome critical academic challenges such as succeeding in ELL (Wright-

Odusoga, 2020). An emergent concept about culturally responsive instructional

leadership in ELL settings entails a creative, well-intentioned, purposeful, and

collaborative curriculum that principals and teachers put in place to enhance the academic

engagement and achievement of students from minority racial or ethnic backgrounds

(Silver et al., 2019; Smith et al.).

Russell et al. (2018) investigated how teachers and school leaders may use

instructional leadership to support ELL students in Missouri. Researchers collected field

notes from schoolteachers on English language lessons and interviews with school

principals. Results showed that instructional leadership practice contributes to positive

learning outcomes by cultivating trusting relationships among students, principals,

teachers, and other school stakeholders. Students of color experience a sense of belonging

when exposed to culturally relevant pedagogy and when their linguistic and cultural

expertise informs learning. By contrast, instructional leadership ensures direct and

continuous professional development among teachers to better meet ELL students' needs.

Specifically, instructional leadership ensures stakeholders work together to identify

challenges and formulate actionable, specific, and research-based solutions on ELL

outcomes.

Transformational Leadership Practices

Another leadership approach that has been used by school leadership to meet the diverse needs of ELL students is transformational. Simmons (2019) explored teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy and how principal leadership practices affect the performance of English learners in elementary schools in South Carolina. Quantitative research was used to examine the impact of transformational leadership practice on teachers' self-efficacy and the academic performance of minority students. Results revealed that transformational school leaders positively impacted teachers' self-efficacy ($p = 0.038$). Transformational school principals also contributed to a 17.2% improvement in students' academic performance in English exams (Simmons). Central to this success was the fact that school principals who practice transformational leadership tend to focus on the idealized influence of their teachers and students, create tailored solutions, in addition to inspirational and intellectual motivation.

Shapira-Lishchinsky and Litchka (2018) noted that transformational school principals work with all stakeholders to identify the needed changes, create an inspirational vision, and implement changes to meet students' needs. Shapira-Lishchinsky and Litchka examined teacher perceptions in integrating transformational leadership practices in the United States. A total of 615 school principals from the United States participated in the study. The surveys showed that transformational school principals personalize their management and focus on individualized learning to meet student skills, needs, and personalities. Further, school principals encourage creativity,

inspire, motivate, and guide teachers to deliver culturally relevant pedagogy to their students. Transformative leaders within the school also serve as role models to embody idealized influence.

Moorosi et al. (2018) noted that transformational leadership practice focuses on increasing the effort and commitment of organizational members towards achieving learning goals. A case study by Moorosi et al. in Arkansas revealed that transformational leadership practices are formulated around a comprehension that considering adequate support, teachers become highly motivated and engaged by pedagogy and curriculum goals to meet student needs. These goals are primarily associated with ensuring student performance and achievement and ensuring diversity by facilitating relevant curriculum content. Findings by Moorosi et al. align with observations made by Simmons (2019) on the need for transformational leadership necessary to promote cultural and linguistic inclusion, especially regarding ELL students.

Al-Aghbar (2019) studied how transformational leaders facilitate the success of ELL students in international schools. Case study data collected from interview feedback revealed that school principals who embrace transformational leadership in language teaching and learning focus on three aspects. These aspects include setting directions, developing teachers and students, and redesigning curriculum and pedagogy. Setting direction entails building learning and instruction vision, ensuring teachers have high expectations for their students, developing specific instruction priorities and goals on ELL course work. Developing teachers and students entails offering individual support such as professional development for teachers and a culturally relevant curriculum for

students. Transformation leaders also develop teachers and students by encouraging innovations and ideas. Redesigning curriculum and pedagogy ensures school leadership creates learning content to foster decision-making, collaboration to identify relevant learning materials, and achieving high-performing students.

Solsona-Puig (2019) designed a dual language immersion program to assess its impact on enriching student performance in ELL. The phenomenological study aimed to evaluate the perception of best leadership practices among ELL school leaders in facilitating the dual language immersion initiative. Face-to-face interviews were used to collect data for the study from nine school principals from different public schools drawn from South Carolina. Results showed that all leaders used transformational leadership in facilitating teacher career practice and student learning. Through transformational leadership, all school principals could lead teachers towards attaining a shared program. Dual immersion of English learning requires school principals to diversify learning content and include different linguistic needs of all students. However, because each student encounters unique specifications and challenges, transformative leadership practices may consist of other leadership styles based on culturally responsive pedagogy.

Missing Voices in Educational Leadership Policies Regarding English Language Learners

Paine (2019) shared that a critical challenge that ELL learners experience is the lack of tailored leadership policies to help them access suitable curriculum content and pedagogy instruction. School leadership exists today in a learning environment of rapid globalization where student needs are dynamic. There is a need for continuous reforms in

curricula, programs, and policies regarding ELL students and career competency among English teachers to align with changing needs. Despite the changing conditions, Ilana et al. (2017) expressed concerns that new approaches changing the workplace landscape of teaching and teacher education remain unchanged in the United States. In their phenomenological research on educational leadership policies and how to help ELL students, Ilana et al. reported missing voices on ELL learners' needs.

The above findings by researchers, such as Ilana et al. (2017), supported Paine (2019) based on data from interviews with school leaders, school program statements, research studies on the topic, and policy documents. Specifically, Paine noted contradictory voices of school principals, teacher educators, and teachers regarding effective education leadership policies for ELL students. Lack of clear educational leadership policies largely marginalizes ELL students' needs and voices and denies teachers essential professional development needed to meet the needs of their students. In most cases, the definition of ELL curriculum is narrowed with school leadership expected to adhere to the approved standardized curriculum where academic outcomes are essentially pegged on examination and test scores. Thus, school leadership cannot support their teachers in developing the needed culturally relevant instruction for students of color (Garrity et al., 2018).

Fones (2017) conducted a case study to explore the experience and role of high school ELL teachers in the context of changing education policies in Washington state under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). A case study and policy analysis approach were used as a methodological design to examine the research purpose. School leaders

from two schools and ELL teachers were invited to participate in the study and share their experiences implementing linguistically diverse content to ELL students. Findings from the interview responses revealed that ELL service models lack a uniform implementation framework within Washington state, which complicates ELL teachers' role when facilitating learning. Lack of a clear voice on leadership approaches to implementing ELL curricula meant that ELL teachers embraced the obligation and roles of assisting learners beyond the classroom content. School principals shared that ELL teachers' practice and role were complicated by a lack of resources and support from the district (in terms of curriculum and training), indicating the missing leadership strategies committed to the success of ELL students.

Similar challenges have further been reported in Texas public schools where existing educational leadership policies fail to align with the changing demographics of local ELL students who come from low-income families and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Lumbrears and Rupley (2017) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study to examine leadership issues hindering effective learning among ELL students using teachers and school principals who were once ELL learners. Interview responses showed that existing instruction strategies in public schools lack transformative educational leadership since teachers still focus on traditional teaching and assessment criteria, test scores, socioeconomic factors, and attendance on ELL students. Existing educational policies fail to facilitate novel reforms in pedagogy and curriculum, implying that learning content is largely irrelevant to modern ELL students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Palmer and Palmer (2018) reported that the implementation of language education policies in K-12 schools had moved away from the government's responsibility to school principals, teachers, and students. Insights from their qualitative study suggested insufficient evidence to show that school leadership has become effective in developing language policy in schools (Palmer & Palmer). Therefore, findings by Palmer and Palmer and Lumbrears and Rupley (2017) agree with concerns that school principals appear to experience leadership challenges in formulating relevant educational policies to facilitate ELL curriculum. These insights further point to growing concerns that there are missing voices ineffective leadership strategies promoting culturally relevant ELL pedagogy and curriculum for linguistically diverse students.

Shim and Shu (2018) used activity theory to examine and compare ELL students' perceptive n their language and school leaders' perceptions about students learning experiences. Using a case study approach, the research includes students, teachers, and school principals from California to understand the significance attached to students' ELL learning process and how they make meaning of the learning circumstances based on school leader perspectives. Researchers also examined student voices in curriculum development to ensure learning is anchored on individual needs. Results revealed conflicting student and teacher perspectives on factors they consider limiting their effective ELL performance. Students noted that learning is influenced by teachers' content delivery and learning materials they are assigned to. These findings reveal that students and school leadership require participant-voice to achieve culturally responsive leadership in education policies and that collaborative engagement is necessary to

comprehend student needs in diverse school contexts. As such, effective school leadership in the ELL curriculum required further research to assess how learning may be improved by including student needs, teachers' professional development, and reforming leadership policies to ensure school principals operate to meet the modern and dynamic needs of their ELL students.

Culturally Responsive Curriculum and English Language Learner Students

Belknap (2019) shared that although good instruction that focuses on addressing the learning needs of diverse students exist, most of the available education fails to meet the needs of every student in the class. Specifically, Belknap conducted a qualitative study to explore effective leadership behaviors that school principals may use to cultivate a high-achieving school environment among ELL students. Insights from the interview responses revealed that one of the main themes emerging from the study was that school principals lack relevant instruction. Although existing curriculum and pedagogy are suitable for mainstream students, the content taught is less relevant to individual learners. Belknap recommended that to cultivate a high-achieving learning environment, school principals need to ensure the curriculum content aligns with ELL student needs and be formulated on these learners' relevant ethnic or racial backgrounds.

Although the learning environment's economic, social, and political contexts impact student performance, the correlation of school leadership approaches and student achievement is essential (Belknap, 2019; Miller et al., 2019). Teacher skills and leadership knowledge about culturally responsive curriculum play a necessary part in ELL students' success. Nonetheless, Miller et al observed that school leaders often have

personal shortcomings where they lack experience facilitating student achievement through relevant pedagogy. Easton-Brooks (2018) conducted qualitative research to identify leadership practices that were best suited among school principals to enable learning. Qualitative interview protocols were used to collect data from school principals in California public schools. Results showed that trust and communication between teachers and students facilitated the learning of relevant curriculum content and helped meet each student's needs. Essential leadership responsibilities that contributed to a culturally relevant curriculum in the classroom included communication, shared leadership, trust, and collaborative learning (Easton-Brooks).

Whitacre (2017) examined school leaders' attitudinal perspectives when implementing ELL learning among second language learners in Florida. Researchers found that school principals who show instructional solid leadership skills lay down the comprehensive instructional curriculum and exhibit relevant actions teachers need to create culturally relevant language instruction for ELL students. In their systematic review of literature, Young et al. (2017) observed that leadership practices based on cultural responsiveness contribute positively to student achievement in language arts, especially when school principals have a vision and believe in all students and have high expectations. These findings align with observations by Whitacre, who noted that school principals committed to culturally responsive curriculum remain focused on high-quality ELL programs, remain committed to their students until they achieve, and are highly involved in supporting teachers acquire competency to deliver relevant instruction to culturally diverse students.

A growing body of literature further shows that a culturally responsive curriculum enhances the academic success of ethnically diverse learners (Umansky, 2017). Tran et al. (2020) noted that culturally responsive education is central to closing the achievement gap and reducing performance disparities among dominant and minority student groups. Emerging evidence from Texas public schools revealed that language preparation programs among ELL students become successful when school leadership anchors their foundation on culturally responsive content (Umansky). Tran et al. (2020) also agreed that the needs of ELL students are best realized when the culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy are used. However, Whitacre expressed concerns that despite the significant role culturally responsive pedagogy plays on student success, most teachers and school principals rely on traditional instruction and leadership methods, implying that they lack skills and knowledge on how to implement the culturally responsive curriculum in their schools to meet changing needs of ELL students.

Belknap (2019) further cautioned that most education has focused on laws, initiatives, and policies when addressing language learner academic needs. By contrast, there has been limited research focus on how teachers or school leaders may effectively address the linguistic needs of ELL students. Tran et al. (2020) believed that addressing the needs of all ELL students may continue to be a persistent challenge because teachers and principals lack the knowledge to provide relevant instruction for English learners in their classrooms. The lack of adequate knowledge and experience among teachers and school leadership has persisted over decades, making it difficult to achieve a culturally responsive curriculum among ELL students. According to Whitacre, the success of

culturally responsive pedagogy starts in the school principal's office. This spreads to teachers who design relevant curriculum before delivering them to ELL students in the classroom.

Doabler et al. (2019) conducted qualitative research to identify effective learning strategies for ELL students. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect relevant data from 14 school principals. Thematic results from the analyzed qualitative data showed that education leaders and researchers had developed different learning programs to meet the needs of ELL students. However, school leaders still experience challenges in formulating relevant and effective teaching and instruction delivery strategies to accommodate the ethnic diversity of learners. Doabler et al. added that school principals have responsibilities, including formulating a clear definition of ELL goals and outcomes. Importantly, school principals need to provide teachers with relevant teaching resources and training to facilitate required knowledge in the classroom. School leaders need to help teachers learn how to prepare and deliver instruction based on identified student weaknesses such as lack of proficiency in English reading and literacy among ELL learners.

Despite the significant role school leadership and teachers have in facilitating relevant curriculum to ELL students, Driver and Powell (2017) express that the success of ELL students is also affected by the learning settings. The researchers noted that the learning environment influences the academic progress of ELL learners, and principals need to give a careful assessment of how to create a conducive learning community. Driver and Powell conducted a qualitative study to assess the learning setting of ELL

students in K-12 schools. Interview responses from school principals in North Carolina showed that school principals who fail to provide support to teachers were more likely to record wider achievement gaps and poor test scores among ELL students. Thus, there is a need for school leaders to create suitable settings for ELL students in terms of resource allocation, career training, and material support during curriculum development and instruction delivery.

Principals' Leadership Strategies in Facilitating English Language Learner Programs

School principals' leadership strategies play a crucial role in successfully implementing pedagogy and curriculum content for ELL programs. Qualitative research by Viloria (2019) sought to identify successful school leaders in public schools. Results showed that culturally responsive leaders focus on building cultural competencies among their teachers through regular workshops and training. Besides, these leaders remain committed to policy formulation and monitoring to ensure the creation of relevant ELL programs. Khalifa et al. (2018) agreed that culturally responsive leaders remain committed to delivering success for the entire school and are self-aware about the need for inclusion and social justice for all ELL students. Based on past literature findings, it can be noted that school principals who have social justice perspective are aware of the achievement gap and about the plight of ELL students of color, motivating them to develop culturally relevant curriculum to meet the needs of these students and closing potential academic inequality (Sun, 2019).

A growing body of literature further shows that school leadership is the most

fundamental aspect needed to sustain the long-term success of ELL programs. For example, Munguia (2017) reported that school principals create a vision for ELL programs and determine how teachers and students should work to achieve set goals. However, a significant concern is that principals may not be successful on their own and would require close support from the educational system to help them become exposed to their culture and the culture of students in their school (Munguia). By considering student culture, school principals develop leadership strategies of inclusion and cultural relevancy with a commitment to promoting ELL programs and services. Such an inclusive approach from school principals would be vital to addressing slow progress in the ELL curriculum (Minkos et al., 2017). Khalifa (2018) agree that school principals form the primary component of ELL curriculum reform and its subsequent implementation, while Pecina and Marx (2019) noted that culturally responsive curriculum and social justice avail the needed framework to implement curriculum needs of diverse students.

De Matthews (2018) explored three cases of challenging community-school contexts that subdue and hinder school principals' efforts. In each of the three cases, the school principals were committed and dedicated to their schools and communities to promote social justice in learning. Addressing the social justice dilemma when dealing with diverse students demanded that school leaders encourage critical reflection in identifying students' needs, shortcomings, and areas of improvement without ignoring any area of social injustice. Findings by Evans et al. (2019) echo observations by De Matthews in how school principals may facilitate equity in bilingual education, especially

in attaining high literacy levels among ELL students. Specifically, addressing social injustice would require school leadership to have critical self-awareness, focus on community involvement, promote advocacy, and implement equity and inclusion (Evans et al; De Matthews.).

Yang et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study to investigate school leaders' perceptions of professional development impacts and needs and the barriers to culturally relevant pedagogy implementation. The researchers found that school leaders who embraced culturally responsive curriculum, pedagogy, and social justice achieved relevant linguistic outcomes based on the student's culture (Yang et al.). De Matthews et al. (2020) and de Silva (2018) advocated that school leadership needs to implement programs relevant to the cultural needs and diversity in linguistic background. Such curriculum and pedagogy changes would align with changing student demographics and immigration trends in modern multicultural American society. Initiating such changes would be suitable for school leaders committed to ensuring the successful implementation of the ELL programs.

Leader perceptions, beliefs, and values towards student diversity also influence school leadership strategies in facilitating ELL programs. Garrity et al. (2018) used surveys to investigate the idea among school leaders regarding bilingual education, bilingualism, and dual-language development. Results from 227 participants who filled surveys during this exploratory study showed that despite positive support teachers had towards bilingual education and bilingualism, individual beliefs regarding the role of native language in the learning environment were considered less effective. Garrity et al.

noted that some school leaders challenged the status quo and indicated support for a new

instruction delivery approach through culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom

where the native language is incorporated in the learning process. Minkos et al. (2017)

stressed the importance of the school leadership's role in advocating for curriculum

change and cultivating culturally responsive practices in their classrooms. Based on the

NPBEA, Minkos et al. recommended school principals to view culture as an intertwined

experience connected to all contexts while confronting bias and providing equal access to

learning for all students.

Morita-Mullaney (2018) investigated the potential negative impact of ELL leaders

in racializing language and how such a mindset impacts leadership identity and equal

access for ELL students. The researchers based their research on critical race theory,

using interview questions to collect data from EL leaders. Results elaborated that

leadership perceptions about race and native language influence the successful facilitation

of ELL programs. Specifically, Morita-Mullaney shared that ELL leaders' narratives

concerning leadership, language, and race in desegregated within the learning setting

when leaders positively perceive the program. Newcomer and Cowin (2018) charted the

journey of one socially just leader in his pursuit to create a school environment where

students felt known and valued for their culture and beliefs. Expressing the need for

social justice, Newcomer and Cowin describe the leader's values and beliefs as having a

tremendous impact on the school and community. Results revealed that cultural

pluralism, bi-cultural programs, and expeditionary-style learning improve school success

among diverse student populations. These findings further stress the need for school

leaders to incorporate the concepts of social justice and culturally responsive school leadership to facilitate ELL programs in their diverse schools.

Challenges and Barriers to Effective Principal Leadership in ELL Programs

School principals continue to experience challenges in creating a conducive learning environment with suitable structures and relevant curriculum content for the academic success of ELL students. According to Black and Haines (2018), a new school principal who joins a school with a high percentage of ELL students and is considered academically low achieving may experience additional challenges creating a quality learning environment. In their study on evaluating the impact of professional leadership and career development in school, Borg (2018) shared that successful schools articulate for the needs of all students (talk the walk) and do what needs to be done in curriculum change and pedagogy reforms (walk the talk). Specifically, Borg shared that these schools evolve by addressing leadership problems and creating an enabling environment for students, teachers, and leaders to become more productive.

A key leadership challenge that school principals have to overcome entails embracing an enabling adaptive learning setting that promotes teacher self-efficacy, equips educators with relevant skills, and provides resources necessary for teaching and learning (Black & Haines, 2018; Boylan, 2018). According to Boylan (2018), school principals must overcome a negative learning environment by remaining focused and determined to achieve diversity by eliminating obsolete teaching and learning concepts. However, Brigandi et al. (2019) shared that school leaders often lack the motivation to change the status quo, making it challenging to enhance performance in ELL settings.

According to Brion (2020), successful ELL programs embrace a value creation philosophy where English language learners contribute to the learning culture. Specifically, principals in such schools are informed about the most recent trends in social development, cognitive growth, and linguistic development of English language learners Brion. Besides, these school principals may effectively overcome contextual challenges such as violence, low-income students, and access to learning resources within communities and families, further enabling students to achieve academic performance (Brion).

Walker (2019) investigated the conceptual framework relevant to culturally responsive pedagogy. A key challenge identified regarded assigning school principals the task of implementing CRP. At the same time, they lack appropriate training, skills, and tools to support their teachers towards realizing this goal (Walker). A similar observation by Callahan et al. (2019) showed that school principals who lack training and skills are likely to display negative attitudes and low support for CRP in their schools, further hindering the success of ELL programs. Chua et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the challenges and practices of professional learning and leadership in schools. The researchers used qualitative research to examine critical issues hindering school principals in improving education among English students. Interview results from 11 school principals identified a significant challenge principals experience regarding identifying measures to improve school learning climate. Specifically, school principals noted that teachers lacked the skills to transform the learning environment to be positive and encouraging for English learners. Also, school principals lack programs to invite

collective engagement of families, students, and their teachers in identifying student challenges and formulating solutions to the diagnosed problems.

Giva et al. (2019) conducted a one-year follow-up outcome of Spanish and English interventions for ELL students at risk for reading problems. A key recommendation drawn from their research included the need by school principals to create learning settings that make a sense of optimism and persistence in their ELL classrooms. For example, Giva et al. observed that school leaders and teachers must communicate high expectations to ELL students and consistently manifest high expectations. A qualitative study by Clemens et al. (2019) on effective skills moderation and facilitation of reading and comprehension among ELL learners recommended that high principal expectations may be communicated using banners in school, both in the native language and English. Notably, Clemens et al. suggested that school principals need to overcome the challenge of diversity in cultures and languages and make every ELL student feel included. In elaboration, school principals may consider implementing cultural celebrations and integrating ELL students in as many mainstream classes as possible. Overcoming these challenges will create a thriving learning environment for ELL students and contribute to long-term success in their academic performance.

Summary and Conclusions

In the literature review, I discussed the main themes from past studies the leadership strategies that principals implement to support teachers' culturally responsive strategies when working with ELL students. The chapter has presented and examined the conceptual framework used to explore the research topic based on the culturally

responsive school leadership (CRSL) model. Besides, I have discussed aspects of educational leadership programs, focusing on historical reforms, and preparation of school principals, and support for a culturally responsive curriculum. School leadership approaches within the ELL curriculum have also been discussed, citing shortcomings in the literature regarding limited research focus on this topic. Further, missing voices in the ELL curriculum and the need for reforms to facilitate tailored learning have been discussed, focusing on meeting specific student needs, especially learners from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Further principal leadership strategies and approaches such as transformational leadership, instructional leadership and their impact on culturally responsive practices have been discussed, citing limitations such as lack of experience, skills, knowledge, and training to develop and implement culturally responsive pedagogy. In the next chapter, the I presented and discussed the research methods and strategies used in the data collection process to answer the formulated research question.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to investigate how school leaders support teachers of ELLs to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies. In this chapter, I present the methods and strategies used to collect relevant data to answer the research question. The research philosophy based on interpretive tradition is first introduced and contributes to understanding the formulated research purpose. I then discuss the research design, approach, and strategy in subsequent sections. Further, I detail the research setting, population of research interest, and sample selection process. The data collection instrument is also described, along with data collection and data analysis processes. Essential aspects of maintaining research validity and reliability through trustworthiness are also discussed before the identification of potential ethical issues related to this study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the essential research methods and strategies used in this study.

Research Design and Rationale

A case study research design was used in this study to collect insights from school principals regarding their leadership role in supporting culturally responsive ELL programs. Case studies allow researchers to make an up-close, in-depth, and detailed investigation of a research subject and its related contextual position (Yin, 2017). By using a case study, a researcher can understand a complex issue (Yin). Case studies may help extend experience or add strength to existing knowledge through previous research. In this study, the contextual analysis revolved around four schools from the North Central United States that offer ELL programs.

The identified knowledge gap informed the rationale for focusing on schools that offer ELL programs. Available evidence shows that school leaders and principals in the North Central United States have requested numerous professional development sessions to help ELL teachers implement culturally responsive strategies (Ali, 2019a, 2019b, 2020). Principals have also asked the district to hire an instructional coach or an ESL coordinator to help teachers implement ELL programs. Eight school leaders have also left the district in the past 5 years, representing 40% of school leaders according to local meeting minutes.. Therefore, ELL school settings in the North Central United States make a suitable case study through which the identified challenges of supporting culturally responsive English language programs might be understood.

Social constructivist philosophy was used in this study (Saunders et al., 2017). The social constructivist approach used in this study enabled me to treat participant responses as a direct reflection of the meaning that school leaders and principals attach to culturally responsive teaching strategies in ELL settings. In this case, knowledge is socially constructed by collaborating and engaging with the participants. Creswell (2017) shared that there is no right or wrong when evaluating the nature of existence because participants in a study often have different opinions and experiences with the topic under investigation. Social constructivist researchers hold that knowledge is socially constructed. Using school heads to examine their approach to culturally responsive teaching and teacher support to achieve relevant ELL curriculum avoids the rigid objectivist tradition, which holds that knowledge is only constructed through proven scientific methods such as surveys and quantitative studies.

Specifically, using semistructured interviews to collect data made it possible to assess the thoughts, views, perceptions, and feelings that school leaders have when supporting ELL teachers in implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies. Thus, using the interpretive philosophy enabled me to socially collaborate with school leaders and collect thick data about the topic. Comprehensive data refer to case study information that provides detailed insights into the everyday emotional experiences among individuals toward a phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2017;Mason, 2017). Notably, the interpretivist philosophical tradition aligns with the perceptions expressed by Saunders et al. (2017). To understand how knowledge is constructed and the meaning attached to events, a researcher needs to explore the issue under study through the actors who participate in the action. In this study, the actors included school leaders from the North Central Region of the United States who were tasked with ensuring that teachers adapt and implement culturally responsive teaching strategies.

Case study research was the primary research strategy to collect nonnumerical data using semistructured interview questions. According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018), the case study research method facilitates the collection of thick data focusing on participants' lived experiences and perceptions toward the study topic. In this study, the choice of the case study research method in assessing how school leaders support ELL teachers in implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies was informed by its potential advantages. Compared to quantitative studies that are limited to numerical statistics or trends, the case study method contributes to collecting nonnumerical data that gives insights into why participants act in a manner they do or into actions that they take

(Charmaz, 2020). In this study, I used a case study design to collect interviews from school leaders to explore why and how school leaders support ELL teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies.

According to Mason (2017), using the case study research method helps researchers develop social and collaborative learning and knowledge construction environments. Due to a conducive environment created during interview sessions, Mason (2017) added that participants feel at liberty to share more insight about the topic being explored. Further, the resulting collaborative environment motivates interviewees to illustrate their previous replies or share new intuitions that a researcher might have ignored or misstated. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) indicated that a researcher collects in-depth information by detailing their initial responses, which further contributes to a clear assessment of the study phenomenon.

However, case study research methods may have presented some potential shortcomings that might have affected the results. Case studies use a small sample size that makes it challenging to transfer findings to other settings (Creswell, 2017). Castleberry and Nolen (2018) also observed that, unlike quantitative studies, collecting interview data is time consuming and involves costs that make it difficult to use a large sample. As a result, there may be sampling bias limiting the transferability of the findings. Mason (2017) added that case study data are often subjective because responses depend on the experience that participants have with the topic under study. Thus, the subjective responses may contribute to a structural bias that may affect result interpretation. Additionally, subjective findings make it difficult to make systematic

comparisons, considering that participants have different opinions, perceptions, and experiences with the topic under investigation.

Role of the Researcher

As a researcher, I undertook all the appropriate steps needed to complete this research. I have significant professional and personal experience in research. With a strong foundation of education as a profession, I am well versed in pedagogical and research frameworks. Additionally, I am a career development facilitator who works with several students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I appreciate the dynamic nature of research, particularly concerning technological influences, and I attempted to adopt the most current and effective methods. However, I have a preconception that learning institutions do not focus on ELL students' support networks through culturally responsive leadership. Therefore, I believe that ELL students' experiences with assigned mentors and advisors may not be satisfactory if they are assigned at all.

My attachment to the research topic may have inadvertently impacted the study findings. To control and manage this potential bias, I used a peer or external reviewer to help me attain impartiality in all stages of the research process (Franken & Loobuyck, 2017). The use of peer or external reviewers aided me in making precise decisions in data collection, interpretation, analysis, and presentation. I also made a point to set aside preconceived information as each interview began to ensure the most effective interview process and to encourage full and rich responses to the questions asked (Thorpe & Garside, 2017). To ensure bracketing practice, I set aside any outside knowledge about the participants before engaging in the interview process. Undertaking such an approach,

I attempted to prevent any preconceived notions about the participants and biases from influencing the interview (Franken & Loobuyck, 2017).

Methodology

This research was a case study designed to gather information using the constructivist approach (Creswell, 2017). A case study design in this study was based on using an interpretive paradigm for making meaning using interviews, observations, and surveys (Creswell, 2017).

Participant Selection

Purposive sampling, a nonprobability sampling technique (Creswell, 2017), was used to recruit participants into the study. Creswell (2017) noted that purposive sampling or judgmental or selective sampling enables a researcher to select participants who have predetermined qualifications for the study. In this study, the participants were school leaders and worked in schools that offered ELL programs. A total of four schools that taught ELL students were included in the study, where leaders from each school were selected, resulting in a total of seven principals. The choice of the four ELL schools was informed by their geographical proximity to me and existing contacts. The participants were informed about the aims and objectives of the study and expressed interest in participating in this research through informed consent forms during recruitment.

Instrumentation

Semistructured interview questions (Appendix A) were used as this study's primary data collection instrument. Eight interview questions were created to examine how school leaders support teachers of ELLs to implement culturally responsive teaching

strategies. Interview Questions 1-3 focused on investigating leadership preparation and competency related to culturally responsive leadership strategies among school leaders. I asked the interview questions to get participants to share their personal information and academic qualifications or experiences, whether they were familiar with the concept of culturally responsive ELL programs, and whether their past training had equipped them sufficiently to facilitate ELL programs in their schools.

Interview Questions 4-6 assessed the impact of past leadership programs in influencing ELL teachers to embrace and implement culturally responsive ELL knowledge in their schools. Additionally, participants shared whether they thought their leadership program helped teachers address the academic achievement of ELL students in their multicultural school setting. Interview Questions 7-8 assessed how school principals determined whether ELL teachers possess adequate knowledge or skills to facilitate culturally responsive curriculum in their classrooms, how they assisted ELL teachers with designing culturally relevant English curricula, ways they helped teachers in delivering culturally responsive ELL curricula, and how they ensured that ELL teachers continually develop and deliver the culturally responsive curriculum in their classrooms.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The interview sessions were scheduled individually on separate occasions using semistructured interview questions to guide the process. Mason (2017) shared that the interview data collection technique allows interviewees to express their views and share their lived experiences with the topic under study. I attempted to build rapport with every participant through the semistructured interview sessions and used flexible approaches to

encourage the interviewees to elaborate and expound on their responses.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix B) was obtained before commencing data collection (IRB number 09-09-21-0963772). Informed consent forms and invitation letters (Appendix C) were sent to participants. Upon receiving participants' electronic consent to voluntary participate in the study, I scheduled interview sessions with each leader. Each interview session lasted between 40 minutes and 60 minutes to give participants ample time to detail their responses while enabling me to collect in-depth and detailed data. Participants were informed that their responses would be recorded for further transcription, and that all the data would be recorded. The recorded information was coded using synonyms and securely stored in a password-protected personal computer. I also followed the interview guide and asked the same questions to all the seven interviewees similarly. Moreover, through the semistructured interviews, I asked clarifying questions and sought additional explanations to obtain richer answers to each question.

Further, I informed the interviewees that each one would receive a copy of the transcribed data to evaluate the data for any additions or deletions to ensure that their responses were not misstated or omitted. Further, once the interview sessions were completed, I compiled field notes and reflected on the interview guide to ensure optimal recall for accuracy of the responses. The raw materials were then coded and secured in a personal computer and backed up into Microsoft One Drive cloud services before I analyzed the information to identify key themes from the interview responses.

Data Analysis Plan

The data transcribed from the audio information were analyzed, following coding used to identify themes using Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis process (2019). In Step 1, I went through the transcripts and became familiar with the collected information. Initial notes were taken to highlight interesting information related to the research question. In Step 2, I started coding data using nodes based on key phrases or sentences related to the study aim. Open coding was used to identify initial keywords and phrases emerging from the study in line with the fundamental concepts of the CRSL framework, including student-teacher relationships, teaching the whole child, developmental appropriateness, equity and excellence, and identity and achievement.

Step 3 was anchored on pattern identification using codes from Step 2. Similar codes were grouped to form themes or subthemes with similar meanings. In Step 4, I began to focus on examining created themes to align with relevant information based on interview responses, quotes, or excerpts (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Step 5 entailed aligning similar themes and renaming them or deleting others irrelevant to the study. Finally, Step 6 focused on reporting the results using verbatim interview quotes, excerpts, or participant responses to answer the study's research question (Braun & Clarke).

Trustworthiness

To ensure confidence in research procedures and findings, I embraced various measures during the research process. The adopted approaches were based on the four elements proposed by Franken and Loobuyck (2017) related to confirmability, dependability, transferability, and credibility.

Credibility

To begin with, credibility in this study refers to how well the results reflect participants' views (Franken & Loobuyck, 2017). Various approaches were used to ensure the credibility of this study, including providing well-elaborated data collection and data analysis procedures. Through deep engagement with the interviewees, I ensured that the participants had enough time to share and elaborate on their leadership experience in culturally responsive ELL settings (Ghauri et al., 2020).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which research methods and processes are reliable and align with research objectives (Franken & Loobuyck, 2017). Achieving dependability focused on approaches such as using audit trails, peer debriefing, in-depth description of methods, and presentation of evidence through verbatim interview responses (Flick, 2018). There was clear documentation of the inquiry process through audit trails, participant sampling, sample size determination, interviewee selection, data collection procedures, and data analysis (Franken & Loobuyck). Evidence included using full transcripts and a detailed discussion of the data collection process and methods or tools such as audio-video recorders. Rose and Johnson (2020) shared that ensuring a detailed description of methods and procedures increases the soundness of the study findings.

Transferability

Transferability denotes the level to which the results of a study may be applied to other people or circumstances (Franken & Loobuyck, 2017). Rose and Johnson (2020)

noted that when assessing the transferability of the findings, researchers may examine the extent to which conclusions may be applied to policy, practice, or future research. In this study, transferability also refers to the extent to which the reader may transfer the findings to similar contexts. In this study, the context of the study is the ELL school settings in the North Central Region of the United States. Sampling efficiency is one of the approaches to ensure transferability of the findings where results captured helped the researcher achieve thick descriptions of the study phenomenon. Sampling sufficiency also helps achieve data saturation and methodological rigor (Flick, 2018; Franken & Loobuyck).

Confirmability

Confirmability is focused on ensuring that other researchers can confirm the study's findings or corroborate with ease (Ghauri et al., 2020). To ensure confidentiality, I provided enough evidence to support findings. Coding of data ensured methods used in collecting and analyzing information were precise and elaborate. Thematic analysis and coding also ensured that participants' ideas, views, and perceptions were clearly articulated for other researchers to corroborate the findings. Clear evidence was used from the interview responses using examples and verbatim quotes from interviewee responses. Flick (2018) also observed that in-depth information contributes to the integrity of the findings while identifying limitations of the study help examine possible shortcomings of the study. Also, my assumptions and beliefs were identified to show how they affect the expected study outcomes.

Threats to Validity

Various factors present potential threats to the validity of the current study, including a selection of participants, experimental mortality, location, the attitude of subjects, and implementation. Creswell (2017) noted that selecting participants to a case study often results in a sample with different characteristics. Such characteristics include age, language difference, fluency, ethnicity, attitude, and status. These factors often influence how participants experience the topic under study resulting in varied responses on how they perceive and feel about it (Creswell).

Experimental mortality may also affect the validity of the findings due to absenteeism during data collection, failure to complete interview questions, illness, and relocation (Ghauri et al., 2020). Further, Mason (2017) observed that participants' attitudes might influence the outcome since observing the subjects often affects their responses. Minimizing these threats would require standardizing the conditions under which the research study is carried out, thereby minimizing threats from instrumentation and history. In-depth and rich information should be collected to mitigate threats from sample size selection and experimental lifespan (Creswell, 2017).

Ethical Procedures

There are potential ethical issues that arise from undertaking this study. These ethical issues include participants' privacy, consent, data privacy, and confidentiality. To conceal participant privacy, I did not collect personal information such as name, place of residence, telephone, email, or specific school names where they work (Creswell, 2017). Participants were assured that their details would not be revealed when reporting the

findings. Also, data confidentiality is achieved by storing raw data using codes and synonyms (Mason, 2017). To ensure data safety, the essential information in audio recordings and transcript copies have been saved in a password-protected computer to prevent unauthored access. The data was also backed to Microsoft One Drive using a secure email. Creswell recommended that raw data be secured for up to 5 years before being destroyed. Backing up the data to One Drive ensured the information is available for future reference if my computer is damaged or lost and for more extended periods of up to 5 years before it is permanently deleted.

Summary

The purpose of this methodology chapter was for the me to discuss the methods and strategies employed to collect data from school leaders in answering the formulated research aim and questions. The research position is based on constructivist ontology, where understanding the social phenomenon of culturally responsive leadership in ELL is continually accomplished by social actors. Further, I also detailed the research design based on a case study and indicative approach. The case study research method formed the research strategy where interviews collected relevant data from participants. In the methodology chapter, I also detailed the research settings, population, and sample selection process. Data collection procedures and data analysis procedures have been documented, in addition to approaches used to maintain the trustworthiness of this study. This study has identified potential ethical issues using human subjects, including methods to mitigate potential ethical problems. In the next chapter, I present the findings obtained from the interview responses shared by seven principals from schools that run ELL

programs in the North Central United States region.

Chapter 4: Data Findings

The purpose of this case study was to explore the leadership strategies that the

principals implement to support teachers' culturally responsive strategy when working

with ELL students. In undertaking this study, I intended to understand the leadership

strategies that principals use to support cultural competency and cultural responsiveness

and promote ELL student success. The main themes from the interview responses are

presented in the current data findings chapter. The data analysis plan, the demographic

characteristics of the participants, and major themes that emerged from the interview

analysis are presented.

Setting

The current study was conducted in a North Central state. Specific focus was

limited to school principals in schools that offer ELL programs. A total of four schools

that teach ELL students were included in the study where principals from these schools

were invited to participate in the study voluntarily. The choice of the four ELL schools

was informed by their geographical proximity to me and existing contacts. All the school

principals were informed about the aims and objectives of the current study and assured

of their privacy. Seven school principals participated in the study. Initially, the focus was

on recruiting between 8 and 12 school principals from four schools that enroll ELL

students in this Northern Central state. Nine principals expressed interest in the study.

However, two teachers expressed regret that they could not participate in the final

interview sessions due to unavoidable circumstances.

Data Collection

Data were collected using semistructured interview questions to answer the formulated research objectives. A case study design was considered suitable in understanding the lived experience of school principals regarding how they support teachers' culturally responsive strategies in ELL settings. Purposive sampling was used to recruit school principals into the study, focusing on their knowledge and experience about the topic. Participants were drawn from schools offering ELL programs across the North Central United States. The participants voluntarily consented to participate in the interview sessions, which lasted between 40 minutes and 60 minutes.

The interviews were conducted online via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Before recording the interview sessions, I informed the interviewees that their responses would be recorded and reminded them of their ability to consent out. The recorded interview responses were transcribed verbatim and recorded on a Microsoft Word document, with member checking conducted to ensure the authenticity of final transcripts. As discussed below, the transcribed data were transferred to NVivo software for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

The interviews were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The six-step process was robust and detailed in identifying key themes emerging from the raw interview responses from the seven school principals. Open coding was used (i.e., there were no preset codes), but the codes were developed and modified as I worked through the coding process (Braun & Clarke).

The focus of the thematic analysis through open coding was to help with addressing the primary research question, and the data were analyzed with this in mind (Braun & Clarke). The research question that guided this study was the following: How do school leaders at the local research site support teachers of English language learners to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies? This was a theoretical thematic analysis, meaning that the data analysis was not limited to any pre-existing theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke).

Instead, the focus of the study was to explain surprising facts or a puzzle where there is no universal theoretical framework that has been developed to understand how school principals support teachers' culturally responsive strategies when working with ELL students. Therefore, each segment of the seven relevant interview transcripts that captured something interesting about the research objectives was coded via open coding (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Every transcript was coded by examining every segment of the responses by identifying keywords or phrases with similar meanings merged to create a single theme (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The exact process was repeated for all transcripts where initial codes were compared with responses from the other participants with similar ideas merged to related themes.

Results

Seven themes emerged from the participants' interview responses (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Table 1 presents the codes and themes identified from the thematic analysis process. Codes refer to piles of similar phrases, keywords, or terms that participants used during the interviews. Combining multiple similar codes resulted in the

creation of single themes. A single theme was generated from similar codes from the

seven participants discussing the same ideas about principal leadership roles in

supporting culturally responsive ELL settings.

Table 1

Main Themes Identified From the Interview Responses From the Seven School Principals

No.	Codes	Themes
1	LS (teamwork, participatory, empathetic, mindful, servant, situational leadership)	Leadership styles
2	CR (understand student culture; language diversity; tailored needs)	Cultural responsiveness ELL programs
3	STR (getting to know; form relationships; close engagement; offer cultural competence courses	Student-teacher relationships
4	SU (make observations; interview students or teachers; get feedback from parents; cultural competency training; professional development)	Seeking to understand
5	TS (communication; research individualist; acquisition classrooms; learning target, teaching methods; reinforcement and scaffolding; differentiated strategies	Teaching strategies
6	KSI (emotional learning; development programs; use data analysis from test scores; evaluate and observe teachers; language and cultural diversity)	Knowing students as individuals
7	EOO (set goals; assess outcomes; equitable opportunity; empathic of cultural changes; culturally sensitive	Equitable outcomes and opportunity

Participant Demographics

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the seven school principals who participated in the study, including their age, educational qualifications, and job group. Pseudonyms were used to conceal their identity and ensure individual privacy. Their qualifications indicated that the participants had years of experience as principals with relevant knowledge of ELL instruction. Therefore, their responses were considered essential to understanding the study problem on how principals support teachers of ELLs to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies.

Table 2

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Pseudonym	Education qualifications	Job category
Principal 1	Master's degree in curriculum and instruction	Assistant principal
Principal 2	Master's degree in leadership	Assistant principal /dean students
Principal 3	Master's degree in educational administration	Principal
Principal 4	Master's in education, leadership	School principal
Principal 5	Master's in science	Dean/vice principal
Principal 6	Master's in education technology	School principal
Principal 7	Master's in teaching and administration	Dean/deputy principal

Theme 1: School Principals Use Different Leadership Strategies

Participants were asked to share their views about the following question: Is there any leadership strategy you prescribe to? Data findings from the interview responses showed that school principals use different leadership strategies. Identified leadership strategies included leading by example, participatory leadership, collaboration, mindful, servant leadership, and situational leadership. Table 3 shows the main codes and examples of the theme *school principals use different leadership strategies*.

Table 3

School Principals' Responses on Their Leadership Strategies

	Codes	Examples	Participants
1	Lead by example	I tend to lead by example	Principal 1 Principal 3
2	Teamwork/participatory leadership	I believe that we are a team working together	Principal 2 Principal 5
3	Good communicator/ collaborator/empathetic	My leadership strategy is to be a good communicator collaborator	Principal 6 Principal 2
4	Mindful leader	I am a conscious leader	Principal 7
5	Servant leadership	I am a servant leader	Principal 3
6	Situational leadership	I would describe it as situational	Principal 4

In line with Table 3, school principals shared that they use various leadership strategies in their schools. Principal 6 clarified that "my leadership strategy as a school principal is to be a good communicator collaborator and try being empathetic. I try my best to eliminate hurdles and obstacles, and other people's way okay in the way of other

people." By contrast, Principal 7 clarified, "my leadership strategy as school principal would be that I am a mindful leader. I take into consideration the staffs' overall culture and knowledge and experience and use that information to guide our school." Different from being empathetic and using collaborative leadership, Principal 4 preferred situational leadership. Principal 4 stated, "I would describe my leadership style as situational. I think it is important to be flexible in our strategies and styles, and I think great leaders capitalize on being flexible."

Principal 1 noted, "I lead by example. I want to make sure that I understand issues completely before leading others." Principal 3 also shared that he leads by example. In elaboration, Principal 3 clarified that "I try to lead by example. I try to go out and get the things done and provide the examples for the faculty to follow." Other school principals such as Principal 2 and Principal 5 shared that their leadership strategies are based on participatory leadership, where teamwork plays a central role. For example, Principal 2 clarified that "I believe that we are a team working together to try to educate the students underneath us. I am all about teamwork. I do believe in trying to involve others and promote my staff to help better themselves." Principal 5 added, "I'm more of a visionary, I kind of get a plan, and I can begin to create the route but from a participatory leadership style. I like to develop leadership capacity, involve, and empower others."

Theme 2: School Principals Differ in Their Definition of Culturally Responsive English Language Learner Programs

School principals were asked to share answers to the following: How would you describe or define the term *culturally responsive English language learner (ELL)*

programs? Data findings from the interview responses show that school principals differ in their definition of ELL programs. School principals such as Principal 1, Principal 3, and Principal 4 shared that culturally responsive ELL programs incorporate diverse student cultures into the learning process. Principal 2 noted that a culturally responsive ELL program should promote the identification and facilitation of tailored needs for learners. Further, Principal 4 shared that a culturally responsive ELL program encourages multiple learning and teaching methods. Table 4 presents main codes related to the theme *school principals differ in their definition of culturally responsive ELL programs*.

Table 4

Codes and Example From the Term Culturally Responsive English Language Learner Programs

	Codes	Examples from interviews	Participants
1	CU (understand student culture; language diversity; religion)	Understanding students' cultural background, language, and where they come from	Principal 1 Principal 3 Principal 4 Principal 7
2	ELP (programs created to meet student tailored needs)	ELL programs are designed to help meet the needs of learners acquire English as a second language and be mindful of the potential for cultural and potentially even religious values	Principal 2 Principal 5
3	DI (allowing multiple learning or study methods)	Culturally responsive ELL programs are not based on the one-size-fits-all teaching/ learning model	Principal 4

Principal 5 shared that culturally responsive ELL programs ensure that "learning is accessible for all students from diverse backgrounds using their experience and

background." Principal 1 shared that culturally responsive ELL programs are designed to support understanding of students' cultural, ethnic, and language backgrounds. Understanding students' background is key to designing learning content that aligns with their needs. For example, Principal 1 shared that "culturally responsive ELL programs for me means taking the student where they're and their understanding of English. Whether they were born in this country, English is not the first language at home, or they have emigrated from another country."

According to Principal 6, a culturally responsive English language program is geared to certain cultures. The focus is on specific student demographics and using their strengths and native language to improve their English abilities.

Principal 2 added,

I will describe a culturally responsive ELL program as one that not only is it designed to help meet the needs of helping those diverse learners acquire English as a second language, but also being mindful of the potential for cultural and potentially even religious issues that could develop and how material is presented to them.

Principal 7 shared, "to understand a culturally responsive English language learner program, one needs first to define and understand the student's background, as far as demographics, ethnicity, a home life, and to get a form of a student's total culture." Principal 2 and Principal 7 agreed that in ELL programs, the focus is on understanding how deeply embedded student culture is before moving forward to help students with ELL programs. Principal 1 also noted that culturally responsive ELL programs focus on

capturing students' background and understanding where they are coming from, how they communicate at home, and how they communicate with their peers. Further, Principal 1 detailed culturally responsive ELL programs as follows:

Part of being responsive is understanding their cultural background that they come from the background in the area that we serve. There are all different parts of that you should understand, and there is also the Asian Bengali community that is moving into the area. Diversity of students explains why it is good to have a culturally responsive staff from all these different backgrounds, who can reach the students, that is the goal because what the goal is for student achievement.

Principal 2 observed that there is a need to celebrate diversity when properly planning a curriculum. For example, Principal 2 held that "what might work for Johnny blue might not work for Sally J. Just because of how they were raised and their ethnic diversity or other cultural diversity that could come to play a part in either the home or in their background in the classroom." Therefore, both Principal 2 and Principal 1 held that a culturally responsive ELL program should connect students' cultures, religions, languages, and life experiences with curriculum instruction in school. Principal 3 agreed with the views of Principal 1 and Principal 2, noting that a culturally responsive program focuses on assessing "the culture from which students come from, what's their background, what's their history, and what is their primary language. Trying to understand these pieces is essential to help them understand and learn a language that is foreign to them with ELL school settings."

The view by Principal 4 echoes observations by Principal 1, Principal 3, and

Principal 2 in that the American education demographic is constantly changing. To meet

the changing needs of learners from diverse multiethnic groups, culturally responsive

ELL teaching is vital to meet the needs of students from different ethnic backgrounds and

linguistic backgrounds. Principal 4 further clarified that "culturally responsive

programming incorporates the changing demographics and allows for students to have

access to equitable learning content through, not just from one's culture, but also from

various other ethnic communities." In summation, data findings from the interview

responses show that participants have varied views about what constitutes culturally

responsive ELL programs. However, a broad consensus is that a culturally responsive

ELL program should consider students' background, cultural diversity, and changing

demographic trends and subsequently formulate an English curriculum that meets

students' tailored needs.

Theme 3: Strong Student-Teacher Relationships Are Created Through Discipline,

Communication, and Close Engagement

School principals were asked to share their views about the following: *How do*

you facilitate the creation of strong student-teacher relationships and ESL classroom

settings? Data findings from the interview responses showed that student-teacher solid

relationships emerge through discipline, close engagement, and communication. Also,

developing personal relationships, creating enabling teaching and learning environments,

and knowing individual academic interests or learning needs serve to enhance strong ties

between teachers and students. Principal 2 shared that teachers are encouraged to learn

about students and their families to create strong relations. For example, Principal 2

elaborated that

> You want to get to know students and their families that are being enrolled in
> your school. You are making sure you take time to look at the data that is
> available about new students. And then, from there, the leadership team should be
> working with the teachers that were in the first few days of school to get to know
> the students. In such a way, teachers break the ice and develop lasting positive
> relationships with students.

Principal 1 remarked that "for me, as a leader in a school, strong teacher-student relationships are all about routine. You do the same thing, the same way every day. And that's discipline. That's part of developing a relationship between the teacher and the student if the teacher is strong in their routines." The need to develop routines and discipline envisioned by Principal 1 aligns with elaborate plans by Principal 2 to use available data to know students and their families. These observations show that close collaboration between students and teachers emerges from comprehensive engagement among stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, parents, and principals) both in school and at home. Table 2 presents the main codes and examples of creating strong teacher and student relationships through engagement, communication, and discipline.

Table 5

School Principals' Views That Strong Student-Teacher Relationships Are Created

Through Discipline, Communication, and Close Engagement

	Codes	Examples	Participants
1	TS (create routine; form discipline)	Routine is part of developing a relationship between the teacher and the student	Principal 1
2	STR (communication; close engagement; develop personal relationships; know students and their families)	Take time to look at the data that are available about new students and their families	Principal 2 Principal 4 Principal 6
3	CR (enabling environment; cultural competence course)	Providing students an environment that is safe for learning	Principal 3 Principal 5 Principal 7
4	KSI (Identify student interests)	Getting to know students at a personal level and building that relational capacity induces positive test results	Principal 4 Principal 5 Principal 6

Besides creating a routine, instilling discipline, and getting to know students

personally, Principal 2 shared that strong teacher-student relations are developed through

communication.

> When I'm interacting with the students to help promote relationships with
>
> teachers, I'm really big on communication. My focus is not just communication
>
> with the families but also with the students. As you foster those relationships and
>
> those relationships you know tend to grow naturally over time due to better
>
> communication, the students become more open and become more comfortable.

Principal 7 elaborated that her school holds a cultural competence course for teachers to

create teacher-student solid relationships. Most teachers are from different ethnic backgrounds and different demographics. Thus, they are unfamiliar with the Yemeni culture that the school caters to. As such, Principal 7 clarified that "we hold these meetings, and we train our teachers to understand the Islamic religion, the Yemeni culture, the conservative, conservative nature of our families, our mothers, our fathers, the dress, the language, the food, what is prohibited, what is acceptable." After holding a cultural training session, Principal 7 indicated that

> Once the teachers are in the classroom with their students, we have them promote their culture by having culture days, by allowing the teachers to share their own culture with the students in a back and forth. Relationship as far as being open-minded to the student or for the student. We hold writing programs and workshops, projects, personal narratives, and we also do a lot of speaking in the morning. And we also were providing around the world in 80 minutes to talk more about cultures and prepare our students for cultural activities.

Principal 6 added that a strong student and teacher relationship is achieved by trying to "always understand where they're coming from, and I try to bring empathy to a teacher." Principal 2 further added that developing strong communication between teachers and students contributes to belongingness to the learning environment. Specifically, Principal 2 clarified that

> Because communication makes the student feel engaged and feel that, whether it be myself as the administrator or the staff that I am trying to encourage in the classroom, students feel more accepted and more that the teacher is taking the

time to get to know they are a person that is trying to be treated equitably and

respectfully.

Principal 3 shared that strong teachers and student ties emerge when an enabling

environment eliminates fears when learning a new language. According to Principal 3,

"the best way to facilitate strong teacher-student ties is to continue to work with the

teacher and provide an environment that's safe for learning. When you are learning a new

language, it can be very daunting and scary." As such, Principal 3 cautioned that when in

a new environment, lack of engagement may lead to shutting down active learning to a

student because it is challenging. So, working with the teacher to provide real-life

examples enhances their experience of learning the target language. Principal 3 clarified

that

> For example, if you are teaching English language learners whose primary
>
> language is Arabic, learn some of the Arabic phrases that they have and build a
>
> relationship with them and have them teach you Arabic while you are trying to
>
> teach them English, they feel a little bit more involved, they feel empowered.
>
> They feel safer, they are not threatened while you're trying to break down those
>
> barriers and those walls and build those relationships.

Principal 5 added that "identify resources and materials relevant to the students and their

experiences. There is a need to demonstrate a particular level of respect for the student

and their culture and even small nuances like ensuring that I have." Also, the focus is on

creating a vision with a supportive school climate and culture that is inclusive of the

people in ELL classrooms. With students drawn from African American, Caucasian, and

Hispanic communities, there is a need to create an atmosphere that meets this diversity. Principal 6 also shared that she promotes student interest and requirements by asking teachers to improve various student needs. Specifically, Principal 6 noted that:

> I tell teachers that I am hoping they would understand how difficult it is for some English language learners, especially those who recently come from another country and who lack any English skills. It is essential for the teacher to understand, think about their life, and step in their shoes for a little bit, see the world through a child's eyes, and see everything as foreign around them.

> Interview findings by Principal 5, Principal 3, and Principal 2 show that teacher-student relationships are instrumental to successful ELL programming. Similar views were shared by Principal 4, who reported that the teacher-student relationship is essential because without cultivating these relationships, "it is very difficult to understand not just your own culture, but the culture of other students. Getting to know students at a personal level and building that relational capacity can induce positive results overall." Principal 4 further noted that solid teacher-student ties ensure educators understand "learning inventories and specific student learning needs. Thus, teachers can incorporate several realia to make appropriate content accessible to students using relevant academic language."

Theme 4: School Principals Ensure Good Student-Teacher Relations Through Observations, Interviews, Communication, and Active Engagement

School principals were also asked to share their views on the following. How do you evaluate whether or not your staff members have good student-teacher relationships?

Findings from the interview responses showed that school principals use different strategies to ensure their staff members have good student-teacher relationships. The identified strategies included making regular classroom observations, conducting informal interviews with students, and talking to parents. School principals also seek family feedback, take active teaching lessons, encourage staff to foster strong ties with learners, and promote teachers' professional development in cultural competency skills. Table 5 presents the main codes related to the theme: *School principals ensure good student-teacher relations through observations, interviews, communication, and active engagement.*

Table 6

School Principals' Approaches to Ensure That Their Staff Members Have Good Student-

Teacher Relationships

	Codes	Examples	Participants
1	SU (make observations; interview students or teachers; get feedback; talk to parents)	You make your observations and interview students	Principal 1 Principal 2 Principal 6
2	STR (taking classwork; build relations between teachers and learners)	Teachers who recognize their own culture and understand different nuances are instrumental to better student engagement	Principal 2 Principal 4
3	CR (communicate with staff)	You can interview other colleagues, especially support staff who come into the room for an hour to find out if they are being culturally responsive	Principal 2 Principal 5
4	STR (empathetic and passionate teachers)	Empathetic teachers have nuances that might be instrumental in seeking to understand other person's cultures	Principal 4
5	STR (cultural competency training; professional development)	Teachers who build stronger relationships with their students will make good relations	Principal 4

Principal 5 emphasized the need to shift "from a deficit language model to an asset base model. Another focus is to look at and see more of is this idea of using trans-language in the classroom, where we would utilize our teachers who speak the multiple languages of, you know, Arabic and Bangladesh, being able to use the teachers' anchor chart and so you would have a model that supports English learning development in the

classroom. Principal 1 noted that he ensures staff has a positive relationship with students by making regular observations and interviewing the students. In elaboration, Principal 1 clarified that

> You want to make sure that the teacher has the routines; they know that structure. You can interview the students and get feedback. Also, talking to staff helps me find out if they are genuinely executing the curriculum they were hired to teach and the program you are trying to run and adapt to, especially when you're getting to the ELL population. Then, you talk to the parents when they come for a parent-teacher conference.

In contrast to Principal 1, Principal 6 and Principal 2 shared that he prefers making personal observations to assess how teachers get along with students. Principal 6 noted that "I would make constant observations when the teachers are not expecting, not even formal observations, but just always try to keep an eye on everything." Principal 2 clarified that "as an investor, there are always opportunities for casual observations, whether it be you know peeking through a window. Stepping in and talking to the class myself." Other measures include facilitating "coaching and learning where you are going into the classrooms, you're making observations, you're doing informal observations in the hallway, or you're observing, you know what has happened in between the student and the teacher in the classroom, what the teaching and learning looks like in the classroom." Like Principal 5, Principal 1, Principal 2 further added that talking to staff helped understand the nature of teacher-student relationships. Principal 2 further clarified that

I have some opportunities to observe and see how the interaction is going between

the teacher and the student. I would then write back to the ESL instructors that

out, you know, make us have a separate meeting to share what I observed and see

what they know about those students. Using available information from ESL

instructors, my goal is to support them in any way. Through interviews with ESL

teachers, we develop a set of strategies that we know will work with individual

students.

School principals also remain empathetic to facilitating the needs of all ELL

students. Principal 4 felt that empathetic teachers remain compassionate. These teachers

recognize their own culture and understand the different nuances that might be

instrumental in understanding other people's cultures. According to Principal 4, "the most

important thing would be a teacher who is open-minded, empathetic, and compassionate

towards the students." Principal 4 further reported that teacher is encouraged to develop

good relationships with teachers through training. Specifically, Principal 4 shared that

Cultural competency training is instrumental. To help teachers gain that

perspective, it would be essential for professional development to be realistic and

maybe even scenario-based so that teachers can begin to see how students are

responding. So, for this empathy and compassion to be built, teachers must

understand what the students are feeling in an English only classroom or when

English is not their native language.

Principal 4 and Principal 2 held that teachers who build stronger relationships with their

students achieve long-term positive connections. Principal 4 added that "by offering

professional development, teachers know how to build strong relational capacity."

Effective skills ensure teachers know what to offer to students in terms of learning

content. Principal 5 noted that "I'm very goal-oriented so I put my goals up for students to

see them again, as a big picture person and I can begin to kind of march towards those

and then start to put things in place to be able to do so." Like Principal 4 and Principal 2,

Principal 5 added that professional advancement is vital as it contributes to learning "how

to better support the students and learn more about the different approaches to maximize

instruction in the classroom while simultaneously supporting that language

development."

Theme 5: Effective Learning and Teaching English Language Learners Occur

Through Adequate Communication, Research, Teaching Methods, and Creating

Learning Goals

School principals were asked to share their experiences on the following: *What*

approaches do you use to ensure effective learning and teaching styles in ELO

classrooms meet the needs of diverse students. Results showed that effective learning and

teaching in ELL occur through communication, research, effective teaching methods, and

creating learning goals. Principal 1, Principal 3, and Principal 2 felt that communication

and study of suitable teaching methods enhance ELL outcomes. Principal 4, Principal 2,

and Principal 3 felt that learning goals and academic outcomes contribute to positive ELL

learning. Moreover, Principal 4 and Principal 2 reported that changing teaching methods

to meet student needs ensures ELL success, especially through reinforcement and

scaffolding, or differentiated strategies and inclusive teaching frameworks. Principal 2

and Principal 3 reported that empathetic and passionate teachers contribute to solid student engagement key to successful ELL programs. Table 7 presents the key findings related to the theme: *Effective learning and teaching in ELL occur through adequate communication, research, teaching methods, and creating learning goals*.

Table 7

School Principals' Views About Approaches Used to Ensure Effective Learning and

Teaching n ELL Classrooms to Meet the Needs of Diverse Students

	Codes	Examples	Participants
1	SU (communication; research)	Enhance communication and engagement with students	Principal 1 Principal 3 Principal 2 Principal 5
2	KSI (individualist; acquisition classrooms; learning target)	Take into consideration what kind of barriers might be in place for each student	Principal 2 Principal 3 Principal 4
3	TS (change teaching methods; reinforcement and more scaffolding; differentiated strategies/framework)	With more reinforcement and more scaffolding, the goal is to ensure better teaching and instruction delivery to students	Principal 2 Principal 4 Principal 5
4	CR (provide regular classes; being empathic; coaching)	We work with students sympathetically and have some empathy for the struggles that they might be experiencing	Principal 2 Principal 3 Principal 5

Principal 5 clarified that "you have to be intentional about it. You sit down, and

you look at the typical standard textbook publisher. They offer the well here is what you

should do, you know, to support your ESL student or here is what you should do if you

must know students in tier one. Principal 1 and Principal 4 reported that to ensure

effective learning and teaching styles in ELL classrooms. According to Principal 4,

"effective learning and teaching styles would be based on conducting an inventory of

how students prefer to learn. They are a lot of auditory learners, while others are more

tactile." Based on these views, Principal 4 observed that having an inventory in place and knowing students' preferences is key to successful ELL teaching. Further, Principal 4 and Principal 1 clarified that

> For all students to have targets, it is essential that the teacher knows which prerequisite ELL skills are in place and be able to identify those learning targets. So, this way, it is not a one size fits all curriculum. You are looking at differentiated frameworks, differentiated strategies that would help all students succeed, even though their learning target might be different from another.

Similar observations like the ones shared by school principals like Principal 4 were also shared by Principal 1 as further evidence in the following interview excerpt:

> The communication part is where you must let everybody know or guide them, instruct them or communicate with them in writing about what your expectations are, what works best that you found through your experience working with the ELL population. Then, you must research that you must make sure that you know these are the current methods for reaching an ELL population. You want to make sure that you have the culturally responsive lessons, and it is not going to be culturally offensive.

> Principal 2 observed the need to eliminate potential barriers that hinder effective learning. Specifically, he recalled that "the one thing I tried to do with my staff would be to take into consideration what kind of barriers might be in place for each student. We have to look at it from an individualistic point of view, no one student what's going to take for that one student to be successful." Besides working to eliminate potential

barriers, Principal 2 noted that, "through constant communication between our teachers in the classroom, and our ESL program leads in their learning." In this case, strong communication creates positive engagement and reduces potential hurdles that may hinder student learning in ELL settings.

Effective learning is also achieved through the implementation of better teaching and learning methods. Principal 5 also advocated using different teaching methods. That is, "you have to bring in alternative strategies to support your students, and so you have to be resourceful. Being able to find things that reflect their cultural diversity, like I said novels, or even engaging with your students and finding out, you know, information from them about what they're interested in, and bringing that into the educational experience." Principal 2 also reported that students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds "need more reinforcement and scaffolding methods with the ultimate goal throughout the year being to provide them with a support system necessary to acquire the target language." Principal 3 also observed effective ELL learning might be achieved through tailored programs and teaching methods. Approaches based on student learning outcomes ensure that teaching in ELL is successful. Principal 3 clarified that:

> We use a variety of approaches such as the SIOP model. We use English language acquisition classes, so not only do we have a model for our students. But we also could incorporate an additional acquisition class for those students who need extra acquisition help. But for those students who are relatively strong and the English language, we can also help them in regular classes while still trying to facilitate their English language acquisition. — (Principal 3)

Principal 5 observed that when things are not working, "address the problem through the coaching and learning piece to provide that feedback. Work with the teacher to reflect on their teaching practices and be able to support them in their professional learning as it relates to better support students in the classroom." As noted by Principal 3, providing students with regular classes aligns with the need to ensure individual support and show empathy to students. These observations align with views shared by Principal 2 in that "they have a different pathway to ELL success. In most cases, we work with students sympathetically and have some empathy for the struggles that they might be experiencing." Both Principal 2 and Principal 3 held that it is up to school principals to keep those lines of communication open with students and with their families. In the process, it is possible to provide constant support, and it is more than just what is in the classroom, meaning that learning should not stop.

Theme 6: School Principals Use Various Strategies to Ensure Student Identity Development and Achievement

School principals were asked to share their views: What measures do you use to ensure student identity development and student achievement in *ELL schools*? Data findings from the interview responses by Principal 1 and Principal 3 showed that they focus on promoting development programs, honesty, and discipline. Principal 2 and Principal 3 shared data analysis such as exam scores, academic performance, and overall student performance in ELL subjects. Principal 2neth also noted the need to promote strong personal relationships and communication between teachers and students. Principal 4 and Principal 3 added that evaluating and observing teachers ensures they

remain committed to promoting student achievement and identity goals. Principal 3 also

shared that student performance improves when teachers are trained on cultural

competency, language, and ethnic diversity. Table 8 presents critical codes related to the

theme: *School principals use various strategies to ensure student identity development*

and achievement.

Table 8

School Principals' Perceptions on Measures They Use to Ensure Student Identity
Development and Achievement English Language Learner Settings

	Codes	Examples	Participants
1	SU (emotional learning; honesty; development programs)	Achieve through emotional and social-emotional learning platform	Principal 1 Principal 3 Principal 6 Principal 7
2	STR (focus on achievement; data analysis for test scores)	Focus on enhancing communication and building up relationships	Principal 2 Principal 3
3	STR (communicate; personal relationships)	Develop strong personal learner and teacher relations	Principal 2
4	SU (evaluate and observe teachers)	Observe teachers identify the kind of support teachers might expect to provide students to achieve set goals	Principal 3
5	TS (improve professional development) opportunities; teacher cultural competency	We look at different professional development opportunities for teachers to allow them to grow in the knowledge	Principal 3 Principal 4
6	CR (Language and cultural diversity)	Start with the students' own unique insight into their culture, and then begin to use that as a framework to build an understanding of other cultures	Principal 4

Principal 6 and Principal 1 shared that attaining student identity development and achievement is based on discipline and emotional development. Principal 6 noted that "having a positive attitude and a positive focus to work ensure students accept their worth and are valued. For Principal 1, instilling discipline works to ensure positive student character. Principal 1 clarified that "identity development may be realized, whether that be through a character program or a social-emotional learning platform. Also, schools are the buzzword for social-emotional learning." Principal 7 also indicated that "Using the social-emotional learning program helps ensure students are comfortable in school." Principal 2 added the need to not only focus on discipline but also relationships and communication. In elaboration, Principal 2 noted that,

Identifying and achieving comes out through effective communication and building up relationships. Whether it be with our ESL staff and or are in the classroom, instructors, the one thing I would be wanting to promote is the idea of fostering those relationships. This is because we learn more about their identity and how and where they are placed from a social aspect from our interactions and conversations with those students.

Principals 1 and 2 agreed that having relationship-building conversations helps collect important insights on how teachers expect learners in ELL settings to behave socially. Also, Principal 2 added that "relationships help identify the kind of support teachers might expect to provide to achieve set goals." Principal 3 added the need to collect data, arguing that "we are constantly doing data analysis, constantly looking at test scores, to see where students are having

success and to see where students may be having challenges so that way we can

reinforce those areas, as well as strengthen the areas that need a little extra help."

Further, when considering academic achievement, teachers offer support to

learners and collect data on their progress. The first avenue available to school

principals like Principal 5, Principal 7, and Principal 2 is the ELL weighted data

and examination scores or classroom assessments. Principal 2 indicated that:

The sooner that we collect exam and assessment data in the year, the more we can

develop adequate safeguards and strategies that we can then utilize for the rest of

the year and potentially for the rest of their academic career to help them become

more successful students.

Principal 3 reported that school principals ensure student identity development

and achievement by observing and evaluating teachers. The measures align with

principals' role of supervising teachers and ensuring they work towards achieving

learning goals. For example, Principal 3 noted that "student identity development and

achievement may be achieved by consistently observing and evaluating teachers to make

sure that you know things are being done properly in the classroom. Such an approach

ensures teachers are adhering to the district curriculum and policies so that you know

those needs are met properly."

Teacher professional development was also noted to be vital in facilitating student

development and achievement. Principal 7, Principal 3, and Principal 5 observed the need

to constantly look at different professional development opportunities for teachers to

grow in the knowledge of the programs that we are trying to instill and make them better

teachers if we can make them better teachers. According to Principal 3, such an approach would "ultimately make teachers better in the classroom for their students. Each student has their path in the ELL program to do work after that group instruction, so each student meets their needs."

Embracing language, cultural, and religious diversity were considered central to individual development in ELL classrooms. Student identity development starts with an asset-based mindset. In this case, Principal 3, Principal 4, and Principal 6 felt that it would be necessary for teachers to always think back at how culturally diverse and linguistically diverse learners are an asset in the ELL classroom and not a deficit. Thus, teachers position themselves to build on students' cultural competencies in facilitating individual identity through such an approach. According to Principal 4, the focus is "always to start with the student's own unique insight into their culture, and then begin to use that as a framework to build understanding with other cultures." Principal 6 also indicated that "students must recognize their ethnic backgrounds, their traditions, and customs before they seek to understand other cultures when they join ELL settings. These findings align with Principal 4's perception that:

> Identity development starts obviously at home, but it can be promoted in the classrooms through various social constructivist models such as, you know, multiple activities and scenarios and vignettes that students can utilize to present an understanding of their own identity. And using that to promote student achievement in the ELO settings is an extension of that work. Going back to differentiating instruction, going back to using various learning styles to reach the

student in the classroom, so that overall, their achievement can be on target.

Theme 7: Cultural Diversity in English as a Second Language Is Achieved Through Equitable Opportunities, Setting Goals, and Cultural Sensitivity

Participants were also asked to detail their views about the following: *How do you ensure the ESL curriculum supports cultural diversity*? Insights from School principals revealed that they support cultural diversity in ESL setting by creating goals, assessing outcomes, providing equitable opportunities, and being culturally sensitive. For example, Principal 1 noted that teachers need to understand ESL learning goals learned during professional learning communities (PLCs) to impart the lessons in their classrooms. Principal 1 reported that teachers are encouraged to "ensure students understand they are supposed to achieve specific outcomes through such PLCs. Also, teachers ensure students understand they are supposed to be proficient at different levels." Principal 7 and Principal 1 held that, as principals, they ensure that teachers appreciate that no matter where the student comes from, whatever their background is, they need to know what the goals are to keep working towards the goal for students. Table 9 shows vital codes and examples related to the theme: *ESL's cultural diversity is achieved through equitable opportunities, setting goals, and cultural sensitivity*.

Table 9

School Principals' Views of How They Ensure That English as a Second Language

Curriculum Supports Cultural Diversity

	Codes	Examples	Participants
1	CR (Set goals; outcomes)	Teachers need to know what the ESL goals are so that they can keep working towards the goal for students	Principal 1 Principal 5
2	EQ (Equitable opportunity)	Providing an equitable opportunity for students to learn English	Principal 2
3	CR (Empathic of cultural changes; culturally sensitive)	Through being culturally sensitive, the focus is to encourage students to become comfortable,	Principal 2 Principal 3 Principal 4 Principal 5

Principal 2 shared the need to ensure learners have equitable learning chances.

Principals noted the need to encourage the staff to always have a self-reflection period,

whether at the end of every unit or the end of every semester. Principal 2 added that

"when it comes to an ESL curriculum, I feel this is extremely important because not only

do we have to provide a curriculum that we feel is providing an equitable opportunity for

students to learn English, but at the same time, we need to be mindful of changes in our

current cultural demographic." By being culturally sensitive, the focus is to encourage

students to become comfortable, take chances out of their comfort zone on hand, and still

participate even though this may not be historically for them. They are coming from an

environment where their cultural or ethnic background might have prevented them from

having specific interactions that they now have moving forward. Principal 2 added that:

> We ensure that the curriculum supports diversity by constantly reviewing. You know diversity within the cultures that we have, making sure that nothing is necessarily insensitive within the curriculum. Every background has its positives, and that no one culture or background is superior to anyone else's. So, trying to remove those stigmas and make sure that we are inclusive and exclusive.

Principal 4 also shared that "it is important to identify the demographics of the classroom. In this case, the focus is to know how many languages are spoken, which cultures the students represent, and, and ensure that we are culturally appropriate is important." Principal 4 and Principal 2 show that starting with some facts and demographic information is key to identifying relevant ESL curriculum that should be used to promote cultural diversity. Principal 5 agreed that curricular tools that are created must include the multicultural learner in mind to train them to acquire the target language. That is, Principal 5 held that "any learning content in textbooks should diversify content with pictures and they try to bring in some stories about cultural diversity." Principal 7 shared similar insights where equitable opportunities are achieved through "training, educating, listening and speaking skills development for teachers and students." Principal 6 noted the need to support ESL diversity through increased research of the ESL curriculum.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this study was established by ensuring credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of the data findings. As discussed in the

methodology and findings sections (Stewart et al., 2017), credibility has been confirmed through a well-established data collection procedure and thematic analysis plan. The detailed interview questions, interview sessions, and thematic analysis processes have been presented to enable other researchers to replicate the study and corroborate the current findings. Credibility was established through deep engagement with participants, as evident from the interview of participant responses towards the study problem during the data collection process making it possible to achieve data saturation, thereby establishing trustworthiness (Stewart et al., 2017).

Moreover, the trustworthiness of this study was achieved by ensuring the study was dependable using different strategies. For example, there is an elaborate audit trail throughout this study that extensively presents detailed documentation of the inquiry process. The audit trail is supported by evidence that includes transcripts, careful documentation of data gathering sessions, and recorded Zoom meetings with school principals. Also, an in-depth methodological description that provides a comprehensible record of how data were collected and analyzed has been discussed to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings (Stewart et al., 2017). In this study, a detailed description of the methods has increased the soundness of the study that may be useful for future studies. Also, there is a precise alignment of the ELL topic that needs to be understood, problem statement, research questions, methodology, research design. Under the next discussion chapter, the strength of the analysis and interpretation have been tested, including checking analysis and interpretation against documents, records, and past literature studies on the topic.

Summary

The current findings chapter has presented significant themes related to a principal leadership role in supporting culturally responsive ELL programs in their schools. Results show that school principals use various leadership strategies like teamwork, situational, servant leadership, participatory leadership. These findings indicate that school principals seek to work collaboratively with teachers to achieve ELL goals as no leaders use hierarchical or autocratic leadership. To gain adequate support for teachers, school principals encourage teachers to understand the background of their ELL students and their families. Strong student and teacher relationships are created through close engagement, discipline, and professional development on cultural competence courses. To ensure teachers deliver culturally responsive ELL programs, school principals use classroom observations, interview students' teachers, and get feedback from parents. School principals also check on student progress through examinations, test scores, and ELL competency. The next chapter discusses the obtained findings in the light of the research question and conceptual framework.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this case study was to explore the leadership strategies that school

principals implement to support teachers' culturally responsive strategies when working

with ELL students. Based on meeting minutes collected from administrative cabinet

meetings from the schools in this district, it has been shown that principals express a lack

of confidence in their role of implementing and supporting teachers who teach ELL

students (Ali, 2019a; 2019b; 2020). Furthermore, it was not understood how each school

principal supports teachers in using culturally responsive strategies. Thus, there was a

need to understand how principals view their leadership roles in supporting the

implementation of successful, culturally responsive ELL programs (Minkos et al., 2017).

The current chapter addresses the obtained findings from the interview responses

with seven principals from the North Central state. I present in the first chapter the main

results and discuss them in the light of the research questions. The discussions are shown

in the light of past literature studies and the CRSL framework. Further, I present

implications for current practice in ELL settings before highlighting the potential

limitations of this study. The discussion chapter concludes with recommendations for

future research.

Interpretation of Findings

The primary research question that guided this study attempted to understand the

following: How do school leaders at the local research site support teachers of English

language learners to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies? The interviews

showed that school principals have various approaches to achieve strong student and

teacher relationships when implementing ELL programs. All school principals agreed that a culturally responsive ELL program should meet diverse student needs based on their ethnic, cultural, and language background. Understanding students' cultural background, their language, and where they come from enables teachers to design culturally responsive learning programs within ESL settings. The finding echoes observations from one study that culturally responsive programs focus on meeting individual student needs based on their multicultural and multiethnic backgrounds (Callahan et al., 2019).

As found in the literature review (Brigandi et al., 2019; Khalifi, 2018; de Silva, 2018), school principals agreed that culturally responsive ELL programs should reflect student needs with a critical focus on reforming existing instruction methods instead of traditional one-size-fits-all learning or teaching models. Considering the changing demographic composition of students in the education system, school principals agreed that various approaches facilitate teachers' efforts in ELL programs. Creating routines and forming discipline serves to make a positive learning atmosphere. Additionally, school principals encourage teachers in ELL settings to have in place positive communication, close engagement, personal relationships, and getting to know students and their families. These measures by school principals may be understood in the light of the CRSL framework.

The CRSL framework indicates that student-teacher relationships should promote positive interaction, association, and collaboration within the classroom climate. School principals have a major role in facilitating positive student-teacher relationships to

promote productive learning outcomes (Kibler et al., 2019). This is in line with administrative support for teachers of ELL programs, derived from the principal interviews. Students from diverse cultural backgrounds need to know that their principals care and that teachers recognize and respect the diversity of their students. Further, students need to be recognized for their different values, morals, and beliefs reflective of their own cultures. Principals' efforts to ensure that teachers recognize learners through close collaboration, communication, promoting students' interests, and enabling environment are crucial to positive learning (Msengi, 2021). This matches the themes of leadership styles, cultural responsiveness of ELL programs, seeking to understand, teaching strategies, knowing students as individuals, and equity in outcomes and opportunity from the principal transcripts.

As evident from this study (Callahan et al., 2019; de Silva, 2018; Khalifa, 2018; Walker et al., 2019), culturally responsive principals work to demonstrate a strong sense of connectedness between students and teachers, which is key to productive learning outcomes. Insights from this study showed that school principals are culturally sensitive. They work to ensure that teachers expand their classrooms to be inclusive of diverse student populations through regular communication, close engagement, developing personal relationships, and knowing students and their families. This is congruent with the themes of cultural responsiveness of ELL programs, teaching strategies, knowing students as individuals, and equity in outcomes from my study.

Interview responses also showed that school principals support the development of a culturally diverse curriculum. Notably, the principals recognize that student diversity

in their background should be addressed using the culturally diverse and inclusive

curriculum that includes their experiences in the learning process. The findings align with

the CRSL concepts where ELL learners should have access to supportive learning

content, personal experience, and integration of cultural values into the ELL curriculum

(Easton-Brooks et al., 2018; Kerry, 2019). As earlier noted, the CRSL framework

indicates that school principals who attempt to practice CRSL must include the needs of

the students based on their culture, religion, language, and personal identity (Liu &

Hallinger, 2018). This is a critical aspect of administrators supporting teachers of ELL

programs. These cultural influences impact how learners perceive, categorize, respond to,

and prioritize meaningful information in relation to their academic goals (Liu &

Hallinger). As evident from the interview responses, school principals emphasized that

they focus on remaining sensitive to how ethnicity, race, and culture may influence ELL

students' academic, emotional, and social development.

In line with being sensitive to changing student demographics, the school

principals shared that they support teachers' professional skills advancement to meet the

dynamic needs of learners in their schools. Specific skills development was anchored on

cultural competency teaching methods. According to the CRSL (Easton-Brooks et al.,

2018; Kerry, 2019, school principals should ensure that successful ELL programs

incorporate cultural skill development. Major concepts of my study align with the

literature (Callahan et al., 2019; de Silva, 2018; Khalifa, 2018; Walker, 2019;), ensuring

that ELL learners have access to the culturally diverse curriculum, including individual

empowerment, supportive teachers, specific ELL outcome goals, and teacher-parent

collaboration. These themes were present throughout the data analysis. School principals who attempt to achieve the purpose of practicing CRSL must remember that the needs and goals of the students in the class may differ (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Therefore, teachers need to have cultural competency through skills advancement to deliver relevant curriculum to learners according to local meeting minutes.

Interview responses also revealed that school principals use various strategies to ensure student identity development and achievement. Fundamental strategies school principals advocate teachers to in ELL settings include emotional learning, creating attachment, focusing on achievement, cultural competency, and student morale. The findings align with the CRSL framework on how administrators support teachers of ELL programs by providing time for collaboration, cultural exchange, and parent involvement, including engagement, confidence, and motivation (Kerry, 2018; Walker, 2019;). Past studies show that the successful implementation of culturally responsive leadership would largely depend on principals' ability to recognize student identity and competency as they progress to acquire the target language (Wright-Odusoga, 2020). Therefore, principals should ensure that teachers have appropriate learning styles, teaching methods, and curriculum content designed to enhance student identity and language proficiency through morale, close engagement, and collaboration.

Limitations of the Study

There were potential limitations of this study that might affect the findings. Data findings were based on interviews collected from seven schools in ELL settings. The sample size was small, which might affect the transferability of findings to other schools

offering ELL programs across the country. Moreover, data findings were limited to individual school principals' opinions, feelings, and attitudes about their role in supporting culturally responsive ELL programs. Therefore, their interview responses may have been subjective, potentially introducing social desirability bias. Also, the non-numeric nature of the collected interview data responses makes it possible to establish causality and the potential relationship between principal leadership role and its effect on implementing culturally responsive ELL programs. Finally, all the data was collected from school principals, while other stakeholders like students, parents, tutors, and education policymakers were excluded from the interview sessions. As such, the findings were limited to the views of school principals.

<div align="center">**Recommendations**</div>

The identified limitations form the basis for future research recommendations. First, the study was a case study, and the sample size used to collect data was small. Therefore, the findings of this study may be limited to ELL school settings in the north-central United States. Future research should consider using a large sample size to collect additional data from corroborating the current findings. Second, a small sample size means that the results might not be able to be generalized to other ELL settings. Future research may improve the recent study findings by using surveys, field observations, and focus groups on triangulating the data. It is questionable whether future researchers can generalize the obtained findings to other ELL settings across the country in the process. Finally, the data was collected mainly from school principals creating a potential social desirability bias. School principals may share socially accepted responses and fail to

reveal their true feelings about the topic. Future research may consider recruiting a diverse sample including teachers, students, parents, and education policymakers to confirm insights shared by school principals in this study.

Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for practice as it applies to school principals, ESL teachers, and curriculum leaders. In the case of school principals, they have a primary objective of offering the necessary support to teachers to meet ELL goals in their schools. As evident from the interviews, school principals were tasked with providing appropriate leadership to successful learning. Through collaborative, servant, and participatory leadership, school principals strongly engage teachers in setting learning goals that align with culturally responsive ELL programs. Also, school principals are crucial to promoting strong student, teacher, and family ties that determine positive ELL learning outcomes.

In the case of teachers, they have a central task of implementing a relevant culturally responsive ELL curriculum. Close collaboration between teachers and school principals is needed to develop appropriate teaching methods, communication strategies, student relationships, and progress assessment of ELL programs. Teachers also require school administrator support to advance their professional skills, such as identifying student needs and creating culturally responsive ELL instructions. Continuous skills advancement would ensure high self-efficacy among teachers to design and implement culturally responsive ELL programs to meet the tailored needs of each student.

Finally, as applied to curriculum developers and education policymakers, there is

a need to revise existing ELL programs. Interview responses showed that some schools lack culturally responsive ELL programs and rely on the standard one-size-fits-all approach. Considering the changing student demographics, relevant curriculum revisions are needed to match the changing learner needs. Education policymakers need to make appropriate changes to traditional ELL teaching models by creating programs that meet learners changing and dynamic needs from multiethnic communities. Essentially, the revised ELL curriculum should affirm that the needs of ELL students vary and that these students have various motivations when enrolling in second language disciplines. A fundamental approach is to develop teaching styles that integrate the vast differences in ELL students' culturally based learning preferences and styles.

Conclusions

The purpose of this case study was to explore the leadership strategies that the principals implement to support teachers' culturally responsive strategies when working with ELL students. Recent reports informed the rationale for undertaking this study of administrative cabinet meetings from the north-central school districts, which revealed that school principals express a lack of confidence in implementing and supporting teachers who teach ELL students (Ali, 2019a, 2019b, 2020). While much needs to be known about culturally responsive ELL programs, it is not understood how each school principal supports teachers in using culturally responsive strategies (Ali, 2019a, 2019b). To understand this problem, purposive sampling was used to recruit school principals and leaders into the study. Seven school principals were recruited from four schools that offer ELL programs located in the north-central United States. Semistructured interview

questions were used to collect relevant data from the seven school principals. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes emerging from the interview responses using the six-step process recommended by Braun and Clarke (2019).

Data findings revealed that school principals use different leadership strategies. The shared leadership strategies included teamwork, participatory, empathetic, mindful engagement, servant leadership, and situational leadership. School principals primarily involve teachers and staff when working to support culturally responsive ELL programs. Further, school principals differ in the definition of culturally responsive ELL programs but emphasize the ethnic background of students, their culture, language diversity, and tailored needs to ensure successful implementation of ELL programs. Achieving strong student-teacher relationships require that principals promote discipline, close communication, and active engagement in ELL classrooms. School principals ensure good student-teacher relations through direct observations, interviews with students and teachers, and active engagement in ELL classrooms.

School principals also have training strategies to facilitate teachers' professional competence and teaching skills in ELL programs. Effective learning and teaching in ELL occur through adequate communication, research, teaching methods, and creating learning goals. Key focus on professional development includes improved student engagement, communication, creating learning goals, enhancing teaching methods like reinforcement and scaffolding, and differentiated strategies to meet the individual needs of learners. Data findings also revealed that school principals use various techniques to ensure student identity development and achievement. These strategies include enhancing

emotional learning, developing programs, using data analysis from test scores,

evaluating, observing teachers, and promoting language and cultural diversity in ELL

classrooms. In the process, principals potentially support cultural diversity in ELL

settings through equitable opportunities, encouraging teachers to set achievable goals and

promote cultural sensitivity.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself by sharing your details such as name, age, academic qualifications, and your leadership strategy as a school principal.

2. How would you describe or define the term culturally responsive English language learner (ELL) programs?

3. As a school principal, please describe the extent you feel your past leadership preparation Program(s) have readied you to be a culturally responsive leader in ELL programs?

4. How do you facilitate the creation of a strong student-teacher relationship in ELL classroom settings?

5. What approaches do you use to ensure effective learning and teaching styles in ELL classrooms to meet the needs of diverse students?

6. What measures do you use to ensure student identity development and student achievement in ELL settings?

7. What measures do you embrace to facilitate and support equity and excellence for students enrolled in ELL programs in your school?

8. How do you ensure the ELL curriculum is culturally diverse and that it empowers and supports the students' learning objectives?

Research Question	*Interview Questions*
How do school leaders support teachers of English Language Learners to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies?	1. Please tell me about yourself by sharing your details such as name, age, academic qualifications, and your leadership strategy as a school principal.

2. How would you describe or define the term culturally responsive English language learner (ELL) programs?

3. As a school principal, please describe the extent you feel your past leadership preparation Program(s) have readied you to be a culturally responsive leader in ELL programs?

4. How do you facilitate the creation of a strong student-teacher relationship in ELL classroom settings?

5. What approaches do you use to ensure effective learning and teachers have relevant teaching styles in ELL classrooms to meet the needs of the diverse student?

6. What measures do you use to ensure teachers facilitate student identity development and student achievement in ELL settings?

7. What measures do you embrace to facilitate teachers' competency in promoting equity and excellence for students enrolled in ELL programs in your school?

8. How do you ensure teachers formulate an ELL curriculum that is culturally diverse and that it empowers and supports the students' learning objectives? |

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in Study

Dear Administrator:

XXXX Schools has approved Larry Cowger to conduct research for the EdD program with Walden University. The purpose of the case study is to explore the leadership strategies that the principals implement to support teachers' culturally responsive strategies when working with English Language Learning students.

All building administrators are being invited to participate in a semistructured interview. You will be asked about your experiences working with teachers and ELL students. The interviews will take place in a private setting and your responses will be electronically recorded.

Taking part in the case study is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline to participate or withdraw at any time. All information that is collected during the study will be kept strictly confidential with individuals and the organization remaining anonymous throughout.

It is my hope that the results of this study will provide more insight on how leaders can better support teachers of ELL students. If you would like to discuss this further or have any questions regarding the interview and research please feel free to contact me.

I look forward to talking with you more about this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Larry Cowger