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Early Childhood Education Leaders' Challenges to Assist K-3 Teachers with Transitioning to Online Teaching Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Lewisetta Monii Perkins

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University

2024

Abstract

Early Childhood Education Leaders' Challenges to Assist K-3 Teachers with
Transitioning to Online Teaching Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

by

Lewisetta Monii Perkins

MA, Kaplan University, 2015

BA, Prairie View A & M University, 1985

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2024

Abstract

Early childhood education leaders were challenged to assist K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore early childhood education leaders' challenges to assist K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The conceptual framework was based on Kolb's experiential learning theory which is focused on the learning process and on making adaptations. The research questions focused on challenges K-3 early childhood education leaders encountered when assisting teachers transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic and what early childhood education leaders believe they need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future. The study involved nine participants who were early childhood education leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic. Audio-taped, open-ended interview questions were used to collect data. Five themes emerged: teachers need emotional support and resources from early childhood education leaders to teach online, early childhood education leaders must communicate with teachers during online teaching, early childhood education leaders were challenged to keep students focused and bridge the educational gap caused by online learning, early childhood education leaders need help providing resources and supporting students and parents when teaching and learning are online, and early childhood education leaders have strategies to use during future academic disruptions. Findings may provide strategies education leaders can utilize when early childhood teachers transition to online teaching. The social change may include strategies for future and current education leaders to implement online teaching.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my father, brother, and sister who were killed in the civil war in Liberia. To my oldest brother who was also killed. They all would have been very proud to see me on this journey. I dedicate this study to my children: Debbie and Jordan, and my grandchildren: Nevaeh, Phillip, Eryn, and Jayda. The COVID-19 pandemic affected our family, and I am pleased to contribute to a study that explores the challenges of transitioning to online teaching in schools. As we pray that we do not experience another pandemic, schools must be prepared if there is an emergency that requires online teaching.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

According to Kaden (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic forced K-12 schools to close in 2020 to protect public health. In many ways, COVID-19 caused an unplanned and unprecedented disruption to the work of many teachers. Bagwell (2020) confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic caused challenges for school education leaders. Kaden noted that, as schools reopened, education leaders had to focus on distance learning and technology integration and were obligated to reconsider the kind and degree of change required. Kaden added that school leaders had to rethink the changes needed to support teachers adopting new computer skills when teaching in the online environment. Asio and Bayucca (2021) found that some education leaders were not prepared to assist teachers with online teaching and some teachers preferred face-to-face teaching due to their lack of skill or experience with online teaching.

Chapter 1 contains background information from research that relates to education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with the transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this chapter, I provide information on the background, problem statement, and research questions. I also introduce the conceptual framework and outline the nature of the study, assumptions, scope, delimitations, and significance of the study. I conclude Chapter 1 with a summary and introduction to Chapter 2.

Background

According to Varela and Fedynich (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic caused educational changes in a short amount of time, including some that most of the world's

population had never experienced. With little or no prior knowledge or training, K-12 teachers had to swiftly move to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ferdig et al., 2020; Kaden, 2020). Early childhood education leaders faced challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Varela and Fedynich stated that although there is research on the education system during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is limited research on early childhood education leaders' challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Varela and Fedynich (2020) suggested that although K-3 teachers depended on early childhood education leaders for guidance in transitioning to online teaching, those education leaders were faced with challenges themselves and were not always available to assist teachers in the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lauret and Bayram-Jacobs (2021) suggested that teachers needed guidance from early childhood education leaders in using available materials to transition to online teaching. Barnett et al. (2021) concluded that many teachers were affected by a lack of guidance, especially with the ongoing change to online teaching for the 2020–2021 school year. Brock et al. (2021) noted that the online learning system is not a new phenomenon in the K-12 environment; nonetheless, as many schools were forced to close physically, using it as the sole or primary mode of instruction was a novel experience for teachers and education leaders.

Bagwell (2020) indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in education leaders reevaluating how online teaching could be delivered while addressing school demands. Ali et al. (2021) stated that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, educational

leadership worldwide has had to be restructured. Bergdah and Nouri (2021) indicated that teachers elaborated on the impact of the transition to online teaching despite the limited experience using technologies and the limitations of resources.

According to Bagwell (2020), education leaders who utilized an adaptable leadership perspective and employed essential leadership practices were able to help teachers adjust to the difficulties of uncertain educational environments. School leaders demonstrated resilience and a growth mindset by modeling how to respond positively and effectively to adversity and challenges (Bagwell, 2020). Barnett et al. (2021) indicated that early childhood education in the United States has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Barnette et al. also commented that many public preschools and primary classrooms transitioned to either a combination of remote and in-person learning or remote learning. It was noted by Barnes et al. (2018) that early childhood education leaders need to stay informed of emerging technologies and trends to meet the learning needs of teachers.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Abuhammad (2020) found that governments and communities were compelled to implement new laws, regulations, and solutions for future cases that helped address education leaders' challenges as they assisted teachers' transition to online teaching. Bergdahl and Nouri (2021) found that teachers quickly realized that online teaching created new teaching and learning challenges. Varela and Fedynich (2020) stated that although there is research on the education system during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is limited research on early childhood education leaders' challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is relevant in addressing the gap

in the literature by identifying early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers' transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed was that early childhood education leaders were challenged to assist K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Varela and Fedynich (2020) identified that most school districts migrated to online learning because of school closures, which was a quick and intense process for many education leaders demanding expertise and swiftness to prevent losing instructional time.

Many education leaders maintained most of their previous work while dealing with the school closures which caused significant problems for teachers, families, and students (Stone-Johnson, & Weiner, 2020). According to Barnes et al. (2018), early childhood education leaders must be informed of new trends to meet early childhood teachers' needs.

Azorin (2020) said that most teachers lack digital skills, and training programs are needed to ensure that all teachers progress in online teaching. Although there is research on the education system during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a gap in research on early childhood education leaders' challenges to assist K-3 teachers in the transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic (Varela & Fedynich, 2020). Identifying factors that challenge early childhood education leaders is essential to helping K-3 teachers transition to online instruction. Ali et al. (2021) found that school principals and teachers faced a variety of challenges related to distance learning programs. Brock et al.

(2021) stated that the process of instructional supervision became more complicated as education leaders collaborated with teachers to transition teaching and learning to a hybrid or entirely online learning system in a short time.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with the transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and what education leaders need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future. Asio and Bayucca (2021) indicated that working with education leaders to assist teachers' transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic is critical as education leaders can effect changes in the education system.

Research Questions

The following two research questions (RQs) were used to guide this basic qualitative study:

RQ1: What challenges did K-3 early childhood education leaders encounter when assisting teachers with transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2: What do early childhood education leaders think they need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future?

Conceptual Framework

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory was the conceptual framework for this study. The theory is focused on different views of the learning process instead of the traditional learning method. Kolb's experiential learning theory focuses on four stages of

the learning experience: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The concrete experience is what initially identifies the problem. Reflective observation is the experience of thinking and observing problems. Abstract conceptualization is the creation of a general field of experiments to generate a theory or solve a problem. Finally, active experimentation involves putting experience into practice or checking whether the method or process used to solve a problem works. Turesky and Wood (2010) suggested that an effective learner uses all four learning modes described in Kolb's experiential learning model. Since effective leaders must continuously learn as they lead, these leaders also must use all four modes.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory relates to the research problem of education leaders' challenges and the qualitative nature of this study by reinforcing the importance of understanding the perspectives that emphasize adaptation. Kolb's experiential learning theory includes teaching methods and learning styles in the education community. According to Akella (2010), one of the purposes of Kolb's experiential learning theory was to identify individual preferences or distinct learning experiences and to adjust teaching techniques to different learning styles.

The framework was relevant to my study because it is focused on a different way of learning from the one that was considered normal. Kolb's theory was used to develop the research questions about early childhood education leaders' challenges when assisting K-3 teachers' transition to online teaching. Kolb stated that experiential learning focuses on how humans adapt to challenges in social and physical environments. Kolb's theory

was also used to assist with data analysis when identifying open codes, axial codes, and emerging themes to answer the research questions.

Lewis and Williams (1994) argued that experiential learning is now the foundation of education rather than being an afterthought. It was noted by Lewis and Williams that behaviorists no longer view education leaders as sources of knowledge and learners as recipients of knowledge. Lewis and Williams contend that the mid-19th century experiential learning movement represented an attempt in the United States to move away from formal, abstract education, in which education leaders provided information and hoped teachers later applied the information to more practical approaches. In Chapter 2, I address additional information on how Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory supports early childhood education leaders' challenges when assisting K-3 teachers to transition to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nature of Study

I used a basic qualitative study utilizing open-ended interviews with a minimum of nine early childhood education leaders who were working with K-3 teachers who transitioned to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach is based on Mohajan's (2018) work, which indicated that qualitative researchers gather descriptive data collected from interviews with individuals about their views and experiences.

I recruited nine participants from the Walden University participant pool and early childhood education leaders' social media groups. Snowball sampling was used to increase the number of participants. The data points included early childhood education leaders' responses to the interview questions about their challenges to assist K-3 teachers

with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After transcribing the interviews, I used thematic analysis to identify emerging themes to answer the research questions.

Definitions

COVID-19: A coronavirus was identified in Wuhan, China, which was caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Abuhammad 2020).

Experiential learning: A way of learning through experience or learning by doing. (Lewis & Williams, 1994).

Assumptions

According to Rubin and Rubin (2011), it is critical to employ assumptions since they serve as guidelines for conducting research and can be used to justify the methodologies used. I assumed that education leaders would be eager to share information about their experiences aiding K-3 teachers in making the shift to online teaching. I expected education leaders to be open and honest about their experiences since they may wish to demonstrate ways to make the transition to online teaching less stressful and easier for teachers. It is assumed that the questions are unbiased and reliable. I assumed that the education leaders would understand the questions used in the interviews and express their attitudes and beliefs. I assumed that the participants chosen would be knowledgeable about the topic and articulate their experiences with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was focused on early childhood education leaders in various parts of the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was delimited to early childhood education leaders in the United States who assisted K-3 teachers in their transition to online teaching. Assisting teachers with transitioning to online teaching was a unique experience for each leader; therefore, this study was limited to the period when each administrator assisted K-3 teachers' transition to online teaching.

The research sample included only early childhood education leaders in this position during the COVID-19 pandemic. Early childhood education leaders who did not assist K-3 teachers in transitioning to online teaching did not participate in the study. Early childhood education leaders who did not hold the administrator's position during the COVID-19 pandemic did not participate because they did not fit the criteria. Both public and private school education leaders were included in the study.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was that it was difficult to find early childhood education leaders willing to express the challenges they encountered assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I used Walden's participant pool and social media, along with snowball sampling to obtain enough participants to be interviewed for the study. Other limitations included my personal biases. To address any personal biases, I recorded the exact responses from the participants and did not voice or rely on my personal views and beliefs. I kept a reflective

journal to describe my thoughts that may identify any biases during the interview and data analysis.

Another limitation was that participants' unwillingness to honestly share or describe their experiences was due to a variety of reasons. To address this issue, I spoke candidly with the participants and I collected honest and informative information. I established a relationship with the participants and encouraged them to trust me with the information needed for the study. I assured the education leaders that their names would be replaced with pseudonyms and that no personal information was disclosed in the study. I offered flexible time ranges for early childhood education leaders with limited availability to participate in virtual interviews.

Significance

This study is significant because it may contribute to the gap in research by providing information about early childhood education leaders' challenges to assist K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. School closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic created confusion and challenges early childhood education leaders encountered assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching. Therefore, early childhood education leaders may need to incorporate online teaching into their curriculum and school policies to prepare for future emergencies.

Through this study, education leaders may learn from the experiences of other education leaders and gain strategies, and tools that could assist teachers in transitioning to online teaching. Acquiring such strategies and tools may empower leaders to prepare

for future transitions, should another crisis occur in the future. Developing tools and strategies for dealing with potential challenges is one way to promote social change.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore early childhood education leaders' challenges to assist K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and what education leaders need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future. In Chapter 1, I identified Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory and how it is relevant to the study. I collected data through open-ended interviews with education leaders who encountered challenges assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Chapter 1, I described the purpose and problem of the study, the research questions, the scope, and limitations, as well as the study's conceptual framework. I included the nature of the study and the significance of the study that identifies the positive social change of the study. In Chapter 2, I review the literature related to early childhood education leaders' challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and the conceptual framework using Kolb's experiential learning theory.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The problem addressed by this study was childhood education leaders' challenges to assist K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic caused teachers and education leaders to face unprecedented challenges as they transitioned to online education (Nasr, 2020). Lopez and Hossain (2021) described the challenge for education leaders as needing to respond creatively to the ongoing needs of online teaching. Nasr asserted that many teachers were undertaking the challenging task of transitioning face-to-face lessons into online teaching. Furthermore, Asio and Bayucca (2021) claimed that the education leaders were responsible for maintaining the continuity of education during the pandemic. However, little research has explored how education leaders succeeded in addressing this challenge. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with the transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and what education leaders need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future. Chapter 2 includes information on the literature search strategy used for this study, a detailed overview of the conceptual framework, and an explanation of the empirical research regarding concepts related to the education leaders' challenges when assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching. This chapter includes a brief history of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on education, specifically the impact on early childhood education, the administrative challenges of transitioning to online teaching, and teacher professional development. Additional topics

included in the review are administrative concerns and uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic, challenges related to social connection, readiness for distance learning in schools, barriers to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the opportunity to change because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature Search Strategy

I searched and obtained peer-reviewed articles, books, and internet sources published within the last 5 years focusing on early childhood education leaders' challenges to assist K-3 teachers with the transition to online teaching. I used web-based databases and search engines for my search from the Walden Library databases, which included Education Source, ERIC, SAGE Journals, Eric and Educational Sources combined, ProQuest Central, PsycINFO, Teachers Reference Center, UNICEF, Taylor & Francis, and Science Direct. The following key terms and phrases were used to search for information for my study: *traditional classroom and virtual classroom, virtual learning, education leaders' challenges to online teaching, teachers' challenges in online learning, teachers' perspectives to online learning, K-12 online learning, teachers' challenges during online teaching, education leaders' perspectives to online learning, transitioning to online learning due to COVID 19 pandemic, teaching technology in the classroom, remote learning, COVID-19, Coronavirus, Coronavirus and education, adaptive e-learning, distance education, distance learning, leadership, early childhood education, online learning, online teaching, preschool transition, principal leadership, technology during Covid-19, Coronavirus, instructional leadership, school closure, Kolb's experiential learning theory, and COVID-19 pandemic.*

I reviewed and selected additional articles, books, and resources referenced in this review relating to the conceptual framework and their relevance to the study. In addition to articles that stemmed from the keyword searches obtained from the Walden Library, I used listings from the Google Scholar search engine and references from dissertations related to the study.

Conceptual Framework

Grant and Osanloo (2014) claimed that without a theoretical framework, the structure and vision of a study are unclear. Grant and Osanloo suggested that by developing a concluding research plan that includes a theoretical framework, the dissertation will be strong and structured with a clear flow from chapter to chapter. According to Grant and Osanloo, all knowledge needed for a research study should be derived from the theoretical framework and the literature review. Thus, the rationale for this study, the purpose, significance, and the research questions are all described and supported by the conceptual framework and the experiential learning theory. Using the experiential learning theory, I aimed to identify what challenges K-3 early childhood education leaders encountered when assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic and what early childhood education leaders believe future K-3 teachers should know about teaching online.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

The conceptual framework for this study was developed from Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which focuses on four stages of the learning experience. According to Răducu and Stănculescu (2021), school leaders who use experiential

learning should enhance their methods and implement promotion strategies to encourage other institutions to do the same. Constantia et al. (2021) and Austin and Rust (2015) asserted that experiential learning was discussed as a philosophy that influences many different types of educational methods where teachers intentionally engage learners in direct experiences and focus reflection to expand their knowledge, increase their skills, clarify their values, and expand their ability to contribute to their communities. Similarly, Guthrie and Jones (2012) defined experiential learning as the process by which knowledge is created through the combination of capturing and transforming experience. The theory of experiential learning developed by Kolb is known for its claim that students learn by experience (Răducu & Stănculescu, 2021). Kolb explained learning as a means by which knowledge exists through experience. More specifically, Lewis and Williams (1994, p.6) clarified the four processes in Kolb's experiential learning theory:

- *Visual or concrete experiences*: Developing initial experience and identifying a problem.
- *Reflective observations*: When an experience is reflected upon and observed.
- *Abstract conceptualization*: Formulating a theory of how to solve the problem based on a general scope of experiences.
- *Active experimentation*: Testing the results of the experience by putting the experience into action and then testing the method or process used to solve the problem.

Austin and Rust (2015) explained that experiential learning occurs outside of the traditional classroom and enhances learners' personal and intellectual growth. Austin and

Rust indicated that experiential learning programs engage learners in the learning process, and education leaders actively participated in their teaching and learning.

According to Guthrie and Jones (2012), it was essential to identify the learning objectives that the experience accomplished and linked this learning to the reflection questions and activities that the learners understood.

Kolb (1984) indicated that experiential learning provided a fundamentally different perspective on learning than behavioral theories of learning based on an empirical epistemology of the more implicit theories of learning that were in traditional educational methods. Moreover, Akella (2010) stated that experiential learning was an approach to engage students, which could simply be described as "hands-on" learning. Kolb described the approach as "experiential" because it reflected the intellectual work of Dewey et al. Akella explained that the learning process that took place beyond the traditional classroom and enhances the personal and intellectual growth of the student may occur in a wide variety of settings, but it usually took on a learn-by-doing aspect that engaged the learner directly in the subject, work, or service involved. Răducu and Stănculescu (2021) recommended that teachers who employed conventional methods of teaching and learning received training in this method.

Răducu and Stănculescu (2021) found that in a society undergoing changes, teaching and learning methods should be the first to undergo transformation and reorganization to better suit current educational requirements. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory model emphasized the importance of learner participation in all educational activities and addressed the concept that experience enhanced learning.

Akella (2010) argued that although Kolb's experience-based theory is a useful learning model, there are concerns about the effectiveness of matching teaching methods to learning styles. Akella found that learning styles are flexible structures, not fixed characteristics. Therefore, researchers have argued that effective leaders must develop the capability to select the appropriate learning mode based on the specific situation (Turesky & Wood, 2010).

While the experiential learning theory was useful in understanding the learning processes of students and types of students, it can also help identify and develop different teaching pedagogies that are appropriate to different learning styles, including the importance of experience within the learning process (Akella, 2010; Austin & Rust, 2015). Turesky and Wood (2010) suggested that an effective learner must use all four learning modes described in Kolb's experiential learning model, and because effective leaders must continuously learn as they lead, these leaders also must use all four models.

Răducu and Stănculescu (2021) claimed that the experiential approach and openness to this teaching method could be viewed as the foundation for further research, to improve programs and implement them in schools. A second recommendation from Răducu and Stănculescu is that district leaders and principals need to prioritize the allocation of funds to ensure that experiential learning is robust and implemented systematically.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

In this section, I discussed the literature related to experiential learning and how it was implemented in the transition from in-person to online teaching.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about fear in most countries around the world and prevented free movement outside of homes. On December 31, 2019, cases of pneumonia of unknown origin were detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province in China. A new type of coronavirus (COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2) was then isolated on January 7, 2020. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) declared on March 12, 2020, that the outbreak of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) that was caused by SARS-CoV-2 had reached the level of a worldwide pandemic (Abuhammad, 2020). According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020), 107 countries closed all schools because of the pandemic on March 18, 2020. At that time, people feared leaving their homes (Alhat, 2020). Longmuir (2021) concluded that the COVID-19 virus affected most aspects of daily life for people worldwide, both in terms of its health repercussions and its social and economic consequences. The WHO identified polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and rapid antigen diagnostic testing of upper respiratory tract samples as the primary source of evidence for the incidence of SARS-CoV-2 infections. The uncertainty and fear also led to setting priorities that could help mitigate the scale and consequences of such a pandemic (Stefan & Nazarov, 2020). Many international organizations and governments struggled to understand and address the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on Early Childhood Education

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic affected many aspects of life, including education. One of the significant challenges that most levels of education faced was the

rapid shift to online education (Alhat, 2020). Bagwell (2020) and Harris et al. (2021) asserted that the pandemic brought about many changes in education. Gonzalez and Jackson (2020) and Kraft et al. (2020) explained that school closures affected approximately 862 million students, representing nearly half of the school-age population worldwide. School systems were forced to transform traditional schooling into distance-learning environments (Gonzales & Jackson, 2020; Kraft et al., 2020). Jelińska and Paradowski (2021) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the most affected groups was education leaders, who needed to close schools and shift to emergency remote instruction. Asio and Bayucca (2021) and Ali et al. (2021) also agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the quality of education for learners. Stefan and Nazarov (2020) found that during the entire 21st century, the global, deep, and accelerated COVID-19 pandemic crisis manifested itself on a variety of levels (political, social, economic, financial, medical, educational, and human) with severe adverse consequences.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, early childhood education in the U.S. was significantly disrupted, with many private programs closing and nearly all public preschool and elementary classrooms being closed (Barnett et al., 2021). Armove (2020) described the pandemic as a beginning that will result in a new world that will differ from the one, they were accustomed to in the past. Nisiforou and Vrasidas (2021) argued that policymakers should consider addressing critical challenges regarding the implementation of online learning in future policy designs. Consequently, governments and communities were forced to adopt new laws, regulations, platforms, and solutions to

prepare for future outbreaks (Nisiforou & Vrasidas). Brown et al. (2021) stated that while unprecedented times have presented education systems with unique challenges and unexpected stresses at the macro-level of decision-making, many education leaders expressed frustration at the lack of distributed and strategic leadership from certain constitutional agencies.

Kaden (2020) noted that during the reopening of schools, education leaders, and teachers had to accommodate distance learning and introduce the integration of technology and distance learning into their curricula. McQuirter (2020) noted that the implementation of digital technology in education had been uneven, and the arrival of COVID-19 and the almost instant need to move programs online at every level of education had exacerbated an already uneven use of digital technology in education. The COVID-19 pandemic, according to Kaul et al. (2020), caused an unprecedented challenge for schools globally, and education leaders took on the responsibility of guiding their schools through the crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic was considered by Bloom et al. (2020) to be the challenge faced by national educational systems to date. Zhao (2020) noted that the outbreak of COVID-19 disrupted virtually every aspect of human life, resulting in the tragic loss of many lives. According to Quezada et al. (2020), the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic caused incendiary events that significantly altered not only economies. Jalongo (2021) found that the COVID-19 world health crisis had profound consequences on the care and education of young children at home and school. Patrick et al. (2020) found that families with children faced numerous stresses due to the loss of economic and

psychological support, and families with children were disproportionately poor, potentially increasing the risk of economic distress due to acute job losses and difficulties maintaining basic needs such as food and childcare. The COVID-19 pandemic required significant adjustments on the part of not only children, but also their families, school education leaders and teachers, and society.

In the United States, Quezada et al. (2020) described how the delivery of knowledge in a traditional classroom setting quickly changed to exclusively online teaching after the declaration of the pandemic (see also Oster et al., 2021). Kraft et al. (2020) indicated that COVID-19 was the reason for the closures of schools in the United States, disrupting traditional educational approaches. Roff (2021) explained that schools were required to create immediate solutions for seamless instruction and the implementation of distance learning practices to meet the needs of quarantined students. In their study, König et al. (2020) agreed that the lockdown presented educators and students with an entirely new set of circumstances in which the continuation of teaching and learning was only possible through alternative means of education, and teachers were required to use various online resources and tools to solve problems and adopt new methods for teaching and learning. As Ma et al. (2021) indicated, however, teachers and education leaders experienced challenges during the transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

Education Leaders' Challenges in Supporting Instructors During the Transition to Online Teaching

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on education, especially transitioning from basic face-to-face teaching to online teaching. The COVID-19-related transition to online teaching drew new attention to existing concerns about education leaders' support of teachers. Pollock (2020) indicated that most U.S. school systems switched abruptly to virtual or distance education in the Spring of 2020 without providing educators or school leaders with adequate preparation, leading to many questions regarding the leadership and support of learning in a digital/virtual/online classroom environment. However, Ali et al. (2021) noted that the role of education leaders in managing schools had long been debated within the international educational community. The pandemic refocused attention on the issue of administrative support for teachers, Ali et al. observed.

The shift to online teaching illustrated the need for skill acquisition on the part of teachers and education leaders alike. As Pollock (2020) observed, education leaders were required to not only draw on their existing skills and knowledge to meet the challenges of educating students during the beginning of the pandemic but also to develop new skills and knowledge of their current responsibilities. The innovative use of new digital technology channels to adapt to changing circumstances presents an opportunity, however. Stefan and Nazarov (2020) found that education leaders can impose new organizational responsibilities by leveraging current strategic opportunities.

Asio and Bayucca (2021) used a descriptive research design to analyze digital competence among school education leaders, school readiness, and perceived challenges associated with distance learning. They found that education leaders had varying levels of digital competence. Their limited skillset and knowledge added to their difficulties in understanding the needs of their teachers and providing appropriate support and strategic direction. As indicated by Fernandez and Shaw (2020), many education leaders throughout the United States moved their educational and associated activities online in the Spring of 2020 in a moment of crisis requiring immediate action. They did not have time to address their deficits in digital competence before being compelled to take action (e.g., to evaluate digital learning platforms and establish instructional protocols).

Bagwell (2020) found that school education leaders could promote persistence and a growth mindset by demonstrating how to respond to adversity and challenges positively and productively. Bagwell indicated that to move forward with their educational missions, school education leaders must learn how to navigate challenges and rely upon their colleagues to implement different approaches than they have previously used.

According to Constantia et al. (2021), the purpose of school education leaders had recently been debated in the international educational community, and this study discovered that the role of school education leaders was continually being reshaped and adapted to the current economic, social, and cultural contexts. Brown et al. (2021) indicated that education leaders and teachers must not only possess technical proficiency to meet the requirements of remote education, but they must also be able to attend to the

local needs of their school community. Bagwell (2020) indicated that teachers would be able to adapt to times of rapid change if school education leaders remain focused on learning, engage others in creative thinking, and implement innovative ideas. Brock et al. (2021) found that not only have K–12 educational education leaders had to learn by doing, but they have also discovered that instructing under unprecedented crisis has not been simple. Bagwell indicated that education leaders, who will be tasked with maintaining education throughout the pandemic, should be the most centrally involved since they implemented the changes in education. Brock et al. indicated that as instruction moved from face-to-face learning to an online classroom, instructional leaders had to find ways of communicating with teachers. Whalen (2020) designed and distributed an online survey that received 325 responses from K-12 educators to gain a better understanding of educators' experiences during this crisis. Whalen found that participants felt overwhelmed and unprepared to take advantage of online or remote teaching strategies and tools, and they struggled to adapt their pedagogy to fluctuating conditions, such as students' unreliable Internet access, changing personal requirements, and unclear or shifting educational or governmental directives. According to Brock et al. switching to a new delivery system within a short period was often a challenge for teachers and education leaders, not only in preparing learning activities and experiences but also in understanding and using the technology. Christian et al. (2021) as well as Reyes-Guerra et al. (2021), and Korkmaz and Toraman (2020) indicated that while a variety of technology exists to assist in online instruction, many education leaders were unprepared for this rapid transition. Lopez and Hossain (2021) indicated that educators

found themselves challenged to respond to these unprecedented times of the pandemic COVID-19 in creative ways to meet the ongoing educational needs, particularly for virtual and in-person education. In their study, Fernandez and Shaw (2020) found that deciding to move to remote teaching required new transformative learning for all stakeholders and extensive adaptive work that was laborious since many academic institutions lack the necessary technology. Bagwell (2020) reported that it was necessary to conduct more research to understand the technology-capacity-building support and the skills that teachers need to adjust to learning different pedagogical practices for online teaching.

Brown et al (2021) indicated that education leaders and teachers must not only possess technical proficiency to meet the requirements of remote education, but they must also be able to attend to the local needs of their school. Brock et al. (2021) stated that to plan carefully for positive educational outcomes, education leaders may want to consider developing multiple variations of practicum courses that consider the rapidly shifting direction of K-12 education in the COVID-19 pandemic era. In their research, Fernandez and Shaw (2020) identified three of the education leaders' best practices for dealing with unforeseeable challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Utilized leadership that emphasized empowerment, involvement, and collaboration,
- Distribute leadership responsibilities to a network of teams to improve the quality of decision-making during crises,

- Communicate clearly and frequently with all stakeholders through a variety of communication channels.

Fernandez and Shaw concluded that education leaders who adhered to leadership best practices would emerge from the crisis unscathed. Bagwell (2020) suggested that researchers should investigate how school education leaders can navigate distress and uncertainty during the pandemic while assisting their teachers embrace the need for change. Brock et al. suggested that it was imperative to ensure that when making online teaching part of the program, teachers can adapt their understandings and skills in their K-12 classrooms. In their study, Ali et al. (2021) indicated that the answer to problems encountered when teaching online lies in the promotion of empathy, teamwork, and a decentralized system of education, all of which are encouraged by the administrator, who sometimes has additional authority. According to Gustafson and Haque (2020), a virtual school administrator who comprehended and recognized the challenges associated with leading a virtual school and developed the skills necessary to manage these challenges will be more likely to foster success.

Roff (2021) used a qualitative study to examine how education leaders in K-12 public schools transitioned to online teaching practices during the pandemic and found that most teachers had received professional development in teaching online. In his study, Nasr (2020) described his personal experiences with online learning when schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the methods he employed to adapt instruction, assessment, and approaches to satisfy the needs of diverse students.

Constantia et al., (2021) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the mobilization of

emotional intelligence by education leaders had disappeared due to the lack of direct interpersonal interaction during the lockdown. As noted by Metcalfe and Perez (2020), there was a lack of guidance available to education leaders in the event of a pandemic that cause schools to close. After the school closures, Borup et al. (2020) discovered that education leaders gave teachers the license to experiment and asked them to cover only essential standards and provide students with feedback and connect with them during virtual office hours.

Nisiforou and Vrasidas (2021) used a case study to explore the implementation of distance education within some K-12 schools during the COVID-19 pandemic as teachers, learners, and parents encountered several challenges. According to Morgan (2020), education leaders looked for opportunities that advanced teaching and learning, and they advocated equal access to technology for ensuring the needs of all students are met. Furthermore, they also served as models for their colleagues, identifying and exploring new technologies to support learning. In his research, Nasr (2020) described his personal experiences with learning online during school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how he was able to adapt instruction, assessment, and approaches to meet the needs of diverse students in online classes. Nasr stated that the uncertainty of how to deliver online to diverse learners became a challenge to virtually all education leaders and teachers when they had to transition from in-person pedagogical practices to ones that resorted to technological proficiency, creative assessment methods, and underutilized pedagogies. Stefan and Nazarov (2020), in their study to evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the challenges and opportunities for education

leaders, concluded that education leaders may be able to exploit current strategic opportunities and impose new organizational responsibilities based on the innovative utilization of digital technology channels to continuously adapt to changing circumstances. To effectively manage the COVID-9 pandemic, Stefan and Nazarov (2020) suggested that education leaders needed to be flexible, account for the feelings of others, engage them, and be attentive to their perspectives.

Bagwell, (2020) and Lopez and Hossain (2021) agreed that educators found themselves challenged to respond to unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic in creative ways to meet the ongoing educational needs for virtual and in-person education. Based on Kaden's (2020) recommendations, school leaders must rethink the nature and degree of the change necessary to enable teachers and students to gain proficiency in online learning and teaching. A narrative format was used by Metcalfe and Perez (2020) to describe the proactive measures taken by an administrator with a focus on the actions taken on how to support their teachers. It was noted by Pollock (2020) that the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed how school education leaders conducted their work; they were expected to be excellent managers and leaders at a time when the pace of change was accelerating. Beauchamp et al. (2021) noted that while there was extensive information about educational leadership and change management, few studies focused on the combination of educational leadership and crisis management at the school level. During the COVID-19 pandemic, education leaders focused on strategies used to assist teachers with online teaching.

Administrative Navigate Distress and Uncertainty During the Pandemic

Pattnaik and Jalongo (2021) stated that COVID-19 caused heavy tolls on humans both in terms of long-term health consequences and death rates. Moreover, they pointed out that disruptions and destruction of social networks as well as the uncertainty of the present day are testing our ability to quickly adapt. As a result of the issues, they had to cope with a multitude of personal and professional challenges as well as support those who were most affected (Pattnaik & Jalongo, 2021). By creating opportunities for social connections through virtual platforms, Bagwell (2020) suggested that school leaders could build resilience as individuals engaged in collective sense-making about what happened while building their capacity to cope during crises. Netolicky (2020) revealed that teachers were fearful of the future of schooling because of the ongoing pandemic, leading education leaders to recognize the need to address their emotional well-being. According to Kaul et al. (2020), education leaders formulated their responses to the pandemic in terms of a hierarchy of needs: they realized that to be successful in the classroom, students and staff had to feel physically and psychologically safe. According to Bagwell, the COVID-19 pandemic offered education leaders the opportunity to reevaluate how technology integration could be implemented equitably through distance learning while simultaneously addressing the conflict between well-being and the demands of teaching.

König et al. (2020) indicated that the COVID-19 situation required not only knowledge and skills but also confidence regarded success in online teaching, and regarding the affective-motivational area, they focused on teachers' self-efficacy, one of

the most important constructs in teacher competence. Due to online learning already being a growing pre-pandemic trend, Jelinska and Paradowski (2021) suggested that schools should consider long-term adjustments to support teachers and students. Daniel (2020) agreed that as schools improved their capacities to inform, reassure, and maintain contact with students and parents, they also needed to develop their capabilities to teach remotely, giving priority to reassuring students rather than attempting to learn new pedagogy or technology immediately. According to Kraft et al. (2020), working conditions played a protective role during remote teaching in schools where teachers enjoyed working conditions, they also had significantly lower declines in their feelings of success than their peers in schools where weaker working conditions prevailed.

Based on the participants' responses in their study, Constantia et al. (2021) proposed that lessons become more interactive that the school community should work together more closely, and school education leaders conduct seminars geared toward teachers, parents, and students regarding both the use of electronics for distance learning and relevant topics. As Bagwell (2020) pointed out, the ability of teachers to adapt during times of rapid change depended upon school leaders who stayed learning-focused, engaged others in creative thinking, and allowed them to launch innovative solutions; and to move forward, education leaders needed to learn their way through challenges and leaned on their colleagues to embrace differing models.

Considering the ongoing pandemic, Netolicky (2020) indicated that education leaders had recognized the need to address the emotional well-being of teachers and students who were feeling apprehensive and worried about the future of schooling.

Constantia et al. (2021) found that the more a school leader inspired teachers with their emotional intelligence, the more effectively they were able to accomplish their educational objectives. As indicated by Bagwell (2020), education leaders were being tested in ways they had not experienced in the past, and by adopting a leadership approach, they could ensure that their school communities were resilient and able to cope with future disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although teachers' abilities to effectively teach remotely varied greatly, Borup et al. (2020) found that coaches were helpful during this time of uncertainty and stress, and coaching not only allowed for personalized professional development, but it also honored teachers' professionalism by permitting them to identify and address their unique needs. Constantia et al. (2021) suggested that an administrator with emotional intelligence could positively influence the entire school community. According to Beauchamp et al. (2021), education leaders in their study spoke persuasively about their ability to develop practical, versatile, and personally reassuring methods of communicating with parents, faculty, pupils, and a range of external agencies, all of which were confronted with exceptional circumstances with varying degrees of resilience. In the CDC's K-12 operational strategy, schools were provided with a guidebook to implement recommended prevention strategies, increase vaccination rates for teachers and older students with an emphasis on vaccine equity, and decrease community transmission (Kaden, 2020).

Teachers' Technology Use and Online Teaching During COVID-19 Pandemics

Kaden (2020) studied the effects of school closures on the professional lives of teachers in the United States and found that an increase and change in the workload of

teachers and the use of online education can support learning for many students, but it must be carefully designed and tailored to meet individual student needs to avoid furthering social and economic inequality. Kraft et al. (2020) indicated that teachers overwhelmingly enter the profession because they wish to make a positive difference in the lives of students, especially for those who have been long marginalized, but teachers find themselves in situations where they feel isolated and unproductive. Rashid et al. (2021) indicated that the current trend in education is towards implementing technology in teaching to appeal to the attention of 21st-century learners in the form of enhancing learning environments such as the online teaching environment. According to Connolly et al. (2019), online instruction provided the flexibility of teaching and learning anywhere, anytime, but the speed at which this transition occurred was unprecedented and astounding. Bergdahl and Nouri (2021) found that based on the views and opinions of many teachers, distance education in a crisis rendered unique teaching and learning landscape with distinctive requirements, which was often quite different from the classroom setting. Bellibas and Liu (2017) also agreed that when education leaders facilitated teacher cooperation for the development of new teaching practices and fostered the belief that teachers were accountable for improving their teaching skills and feeling responsible for their student's success, then teachers became more self-confident in their ability to implement multiple and effective instructional strategies. According to Maaliw (2020), personalized e-learning created a profound and richer experience for learners by focusing on the personalization of learning.

According to Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020), in circumstances where students could not attend face-to-face learning education, the alternative was to move from traditional learning environments to online learning environments. Maaliw (2020) stated that distance learning was said to have its primary objective in personalizing the learning experience for the individual learner. The rapid implementation of distance learning brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic created a technological challenge for many teachers (Rabaglietti et al., 2021). Using a mixed-methods design, An et al. (2021) explored K-12 teachers' feelings, experiences, and perspectives regarding online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and their perceptions of the new changes following COVID-19 and what should have been done to better prepare teachers for future emergencies. According to Rashid et al. (2021), technical difficulties that arose during online teaching were hard to resolve because teachers were unfamiliar with the electronic platform used to conduct online instruction. Bellibas and Liu (2017) indicated that teachers are more likely to generate greater effective perceptions when they gain more information and practice through training programs. Maaliw (2020) found that most distance learning environments failed to recognize that students have varying needs when it comes to learning. In his study, Whalen (2020) noted that while teachers who used the technology frequently in their practice, including in blended learning, had an easier time transitioning to emergency remote teaching for themselves, they seemed to have been learning online and remote teaching strategies and tools while doing so.

McQuirter (2020) indicated that efforts to enact educational change, especially the adoption of technology in the classroom, have met with mixed success in the past.

Gustafson and Haque (2020) indicated that virtual schools were one of the fastest-growing educational options for students in the United States, and despite the increase in virtual programs and enrollment, little research had been performed on how virtual school principals lead their organizations. According to Kraft et al. (2020), the abrupt and total change in how and where teachers delivered instruction, coupled with the health risks and economic implications of the pandemic, created a uniquely stressful and challenging working environment for teachers. School leaders were forced to rethink the nature and degree of change necessary to support teachers and students in adopting new technologies and technical skills to navigate teaching and learning in an online environment (Kaden, 2020). McQuirter noted that the implementation of digital technology in education has been uneven, and the arrival of COVID-19 and the almost instant need to move programs online at every level of education has exacerbated an already uneven use of digital technology in education. In examining K-12 teachers' feelings, experiences, and perspectives regarding online teaching during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, An et al. (2021) offered a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of their online teaching approaches, strategies, challenges they faced, and their perspectives of the new changes following the pandemic, and what can be done to better prepare teachers for future emergencies.

Ogodo et al. (2021) collected data from 109 teachers across 12 states in the U.S. via an online survey to examine teacher experiences, digital competency, and instructional technology self-efficacy associated with transitions from in-person to virtual learning environments. Ogodo et al. (2021) found that there had been an intentional shift

in U.S. schools in recent decades towards technology-supported instruction, which led to a variety of remote education models and approaches. Ma et al. (2021) indicated that there had been numerous forms of online teaching before the COVID-19 pandemic including a range of online open courses and distance learning. Iivari et al. (2020) agreed that children had been immersed in digital technology since birth, but that these children were not equally prepared for their technology-rich futures and that a variety of digital divides continued to exist in society, which affected the young generation as well as their digital identities. Ma et al. indicated that although online teaching was not a new phenomenon, the move to online instruction arose from COVID-19 in a variety of ways, both from the perspective of the teacher and the student. Ogodo et al. found that a) many teachers were technologically competent for classroom instruction, although they were unable to teach effectively online due to inadequate training and limited access to digital tools and resources, and b) teachers' level of digital competency corresponded with self-efficacy, and c) the COVID-19 Pandemic exacerbated the existing digital divide and unequal distribution of resources. Roff (2021) suggested that teachers should be prepared to use a variety of instructional methods, different media, and/or different applications and that these topics should be covered in professional development.

Ferdig et al. (2020) stated in their study that with the rise in online learning after the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers were more likely to focus on efficacy, thereby desensitizing the learning process. Morgan (2020) indicated that at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers were instructed to report to work so they could receive training on remote instruction, but schools were closed for students. The plan to combat

the spread of the virus involved lending computers to students without them at home and providing internet access to children without their personal computers. Iivari et al. (2020) stated that there were challenges with technology access and use among both adults and children, as well as with the skills and competencies to integrate digital tools into learning and teaching practices in a meaningful way to gain maximum benefits from the use of these tools. Kim (2020) stated that, while young children may not have the technical skills necessary to perform online learning tasks, such as typing responses into a chat screen or sharing files with written information, the various functions and tools of video communication platforms could have been helpful to children's learning when teachers utilized them appropriately. Iivari et al. also pointed out that teachers and schools had to take the lead in this sudden, unexpected, transformative change in children's education without being adequately prepared. Metcalfe and Perez (2020) explained that at their school, iPads were distributed to students, and teachers were able to connect with students immediately.

The teachers Iivari et al. (2020) studied reported challenges related to limited access to students and/or technology, limited skills and competencies, and the burden of delivering online instruction. During the pandemic, Kraft et al. (2020) found that supportive working conditions in schools had been critical to supporting teachers' sense of success, and teachers were less likely to experience declining feelings of success when working in schools that supported strong communication, targeted training, meaningful collaboration, fair expectations, and authentic recognition. According to Kraft et al., the abrupt and total change in how and where teachers delivered instruction, coupled with the

health risks and economic implications of the pandemic, created a uniquely stressful and challenging working environment for teachers. In their study, Constantia et al. (2021) agreed that human interaction was increasingly dependent on technology, but unfortunately, both teachers and education leaders were lacking in the technical skills required to deal with the distance education generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was agreed by Iivari et al. that some teachers displayed resilience, creativity, and perseverance during the pandemic of COVID-19, whereas others failed to do so. According to McQuirter (2020), support for the development of technical skills, in combination with co-teaching and a willingness to embrace change contributed to a greater sense of agency among teachers and a greater willingness to embrace change.

Kim (2020) indicated that online learning was a form of distance education that took place online and became ubiquitous because of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Kaden (2020) noted that, during the COVID-19 crisis, while the methods of instruction and learning were not new, many teachers were unfamiliar with them, and their roles changed. Jelinska and Paradowski (2021) indicated that teachers were required to shift to emergency remote instruction when COVID-19 broke out, often without prior notice. Kaden showed that many teachers were forced to work from home, their current lesson plans were no longer valid, they were under pressure to acquire new technologies quickly, and they were cut off from their students because of the single most horrific and transformative event of the modern era. According to Kim (2020), online learning and teaching had an indispensable role in early childhood education, despite ongoing debates regarding whether early exposure to information and communication technologies is

beneficial to young children. Nasr (2020) stated that even though the technology is a valuable tool for ensuring the continuation of remote student learning, it is also a significant obstacle to authentic learning for students who are tempted to cross the line of academic integrity.

König et al. (2020) argued that teachers faced significant challenges in adapting to online teaching, communicating, and assisting students with their educational and developmental needs. Unfortunately, it is not known whether teachers have been successful in overcoming these challenges and which factors are most relevant. McQuirter (2020) suggested that past attempts to enact changes in education, such as the adoption of technology in the classroom, have met with mixed results. Kraft et al. (2020) pointed out that for most teachers, the switch entailed mastering a diversity of new pedagogical strategies for teaching online, but the change may have been especially difficult for teachers who did not have confidence in their use of educational technology before the pandemic. As Metcalfe and Perez (2020) began to train teachers online, they noted that while most teachers accepted the idea that they would have to deliver instruction online, some were hesitant to participate in online learning. Metcalfe and Perez suggested that to sustain consistency and foster relationships with families, teachers needed to adhere to a schedule.

Ogodo (2021) used Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory to investigate teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy regarding their technical knowledge and competencies in the transition to virtual education. He concluded that teachers' perception of themselves during the transition to the online teaching setting was crucial to their

teaching abilities and learning outcomes. Kim (2020) reported that a teaching practicum provided teachers with the opportunity to gain authentic and hands-on experience in an actual classroom environment, as well as allowing them to apply their knowledge concerning children's development and curriculum content. According to König et al. (2020), the use of information and communication technology tools, in particular the development of digital teacher competencies and the provision of opportunities for teacher education to learn these skills, were crucial in adapting to online teaching during COVID-19 school closures. Nisiforou and Vrasidas (2021) reported that teachers were not prepared for the switch to online learning during the recent influenza pandemic and that inadequate access to technology and digital skills caused difficulties for this group of teachers. Kraft et al. (2020) stated that it was not surprising that teachers experienced a decline in their sense of success during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding teachers who lacked confidence in using educational technology before the pandemic, they may have found this shift particularly challenging. The survey results reported by Roff (2021) indicated that there was almost an even split among the education leaders surveyed regarding the readiness of teachers for distance education: Fifty-three percent (53%) of the respondents felt that their faculty and staff were prepared; 47% did not agree.

To respond to teachers' specific needs and concerns because of the COVID-19 outbreak, Borup et al. (2020) used an innovative learning coach and two professional learning community coaches who worked full-time. Borup et al. suggested that increased efforts should be implemented to train teachers to meet present expectations and recognize the importance of developing a workforce that can help with online teaching

due to the COVID-19 epidemic. Teachers faced enormous challenges when adopting new technologies and acquiring technical skills to navigate learning in a virtual environment, so school education leaders must rethink the nature and degree of change necessary (Kaden, 2020). Kim (2020) explained how a teacher education course in early childhood education was redesigned to offer opportunities for student teachers to learn and teach online. She described the three phases of the experiences of online student teachers: preparation, implementation, and reflection. Kim suggested that online learning had a few advantages: for example, it could increase participation rates because it did not depend on students being at the location at the same time, and it could reduce costs since online learning reduces travel and other expenses associated with attending in-person classes. According to Ogodo et al. (2021), a structured approach to teaching and learning was essential for online learning, virtual learning, computer-based learning, and web-based learning. Kim found that teachers who participated in online teaching experiences were given opportunities to interact with children and reflect on how to best promote young children's development and learning online. Kraft et al. (2020) showed that schools' efforts to support teachers during the crisis appeared to be of great importance and suggested that schools with more supportive remote working arrangements were more effective in ensuring that their teachers maintained a sense of accomplishment during the crisis.

In their study, Burns et al. (2020) explained one teacher education response to school closures following the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in an online practice course called the pandemic practicum, which was developed as a result. Burns et al. found that

in March 2020, teachers were prompted to move to online delivery of content for teachers. While this pivot was not simple, it was at least conceivable in most cases, but the integration of an online solution for the teaching practicum proved to be more challenging, a cornerstone of teacher education. Nasr (2020) pointed out that many teachers found themselves in a precarious position in which to redesign previously developed face-to-face lessons for online delivery. Kaden (2020) stated that teachers needed to develop creative ways to engage pupils and move to more effective instructional strategies and that they were required to provide meaningful educational experiences to all students, whether distance learning, online learning, or virtual learning. Jelinska and Paradowski (2021) conducted a study on nearly 1,500 instructors from 118 countries to determine how they managed the transition to online instruction and found that teachers were most engaged and coped best with the shift when they had prior experience with remote teaching and used synchronous real-time tools.

In their study of teachers' experiences during an emergency remote teaching situation, Kraft et al. (2020) analyzed the responses received from a sample of 7,841 teachers across 206 schools and 9 states and found that the pandemic and pivot to emergency remote teaching led to a sudden decrease in teachers' feelings of success. Kraft et al. found that teachers at every stage of their careers faced challenges related to the move to remote teaching, but in different ways, for example, mid-career teachers with children at home had difficulty balancing their professional responsibilities with family obligations, and veteran teachers were much more likely to be uncomfortable using the technology required.

Professional Development for Transitioning to Online Teaching

Steele et al. (2020) noted that teachers had trouble with the transition from traditional teaching to developing relevant lesson plans that fostered student engagement because they had to learn how to integrate technology in the classroom rapidly and learn new programs and platforms simultaneously. Barnes et al. (2018) reported that prior research also indicated that early childhood teachers needed training that was relevant to their day-to-day tasks and teaching environments. Using the views and opinions of most of the teachers surveyed by Bergdahl and Nouri (2021), they concluded that teachers realized distance education, in times of crisis, renders a new teaching and learning environment with unique conditions and requirements, which were different from traditional classroom learning. Kaul et al. (2020) indicated that while many states and districts emphasized the importance of online instruction, their plans ignored the wide disparities in community access to technology and the Internet, resulting in education leaders having to ensure that their students and staff had basic access to the Internet and technology, and design their instruction accordingly.

Metcalfe and Perez (2020) indicated that most teachers supported the idea of teaching online, but some had expressed apprehension about providing instruction in this manner. Barnes et al. (2018) noted that the increasing prevalence of technology-based and online courses offers an opportunity for improving accessibility and reducing barriers to quality training and that with the rapidly increasing availability of technology, early childhood professionals were increasingly seeking out online professional development opportunities. Korkmaz and Toraman (2020) conducted a study that used an online

questionnaire to analyze the difficulties educators encountered in online learning practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, the changes they anticipate in educational practices after COVID-19, and the measures for preventing an outbreak in the future. Korkmaz and Toraman found that many educators experienced difficulties during their online learning practices, anticipated significant changes in educational practices in the post-COVID-19 world, and suggest essential precautions should be taken to prevent a future outbreak. According to Barnes et al., while applicability appeared to be a quality of professional development training, its mention in multiple studies suggested that professionals may not always be able to effectively apply the knowledge they acquire from professional development training. Furthermore, given that timing was identified as a barrier to professional development, the issue of ideal training time appeared in the literature but with inconsistent findings. According to Barnes et al., given the disparities among childcare standards, licensing, and training across states, assessments may be the most useful tool in addressing issues of design, quality, and delivery of early childhood professional development.

Nasr (2020) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges for teachers throughout the country who had to adjust the methods of instruction and assessment to prepare for online teaching. Kaden (2020) agreed that as schools reopened, teachers and education leaders needed to integrate technology and online teaching into their curricula. Barnes et al. (2018) indicated that providing professional development opportunities for early childhood teachers could contribute to improving the quality of care and therefore improve the health and well-being of children. Viner et al. (2020) indicated that teaching

with technology was more than just a cognitive activity but rather a practice shaped by structural conditions. Bagwell (2020) agreed that more research should be conducted to learn more about the technical support and skills needed by teachers to adapt to learning different pedagogical practices for distance learning. The research of McQuirter (2020) indicated that institutional support for the development of technical skills, coupled with co-teaching and a willingness to embrace change, contributed to a greater sense of agency among teachers and a greater willingness to embrace change. A COVID-19 pandemic online teaching experience was described by Kaden to identify what was new and important in education as well as provide a warning message. Morgan (2020) found that schools that had the technology to provide online education prevented students from falling behind academically, but online programs are often poorly designed. To avoid such a result, Morgan proposed that educators follow guidelines published by reputable organizations such as the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) to implement this type of instruction. According to Morgan, ISTE acquired EdSurge in 2019, and the two organizations released recommendations about how to use remote education to benefit students during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Johnson et al. (2020), teachers employed new teaching methods regardless of whether they had previous experience teaching online. Nasr (2020) agreed that regardless of their comfort level, teachers were obliged to learn about and use technology, although some were already proficient in using technology, while others hardly used online tools to facilitate student learning in face-to-face classroom situations.

Constantia et al. (2021) determined that school education leaders and teachers faced many challenges due to alienation, marginalization, time management, improved bureaucracy, problems with technical equipment, and distance learning programs. Daniel (2020) agreed that many institutions had plans to make greater use of technology in teaching, but the outbreak of COVID-19 meant that changes intended to occur over months or years had to be implemented in a few days. Ma et al. (2021) explained that some challenges were related to the separation between the teachers and their students in comparison to conventional classroom instruction and the lack of experience with online instruction. Cardullo et al. (2021) concurred and added that other challenges were the lack of Internet connection, the lack of interaction and communication, and the lack of motivation and student engagement. According to Barnes et al. (2018), while online training provided a convenient, accessible, and effective structure for professional development, content quality, and choice were key factors. Barnes et al. indicated that professional development courses should be shaped according to learner needs, interests, and preferences. Daniel advised that in preparing to teach remotely, schools should take advantage of asynchronous learning, which works best in digital formats.

Cardullo et al. (2021) used surveys and questionnaires to examine the relationship between factors in the extended technology acceptance model and teachers' self-efficacy in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, they interviewed classroom teachers to gain an unbiased perspective on the benefits and challenges of teaching remotely during this period. Cardullo et al. found that teachers were doing everything in their power to engage with students through platforms such as Zoom or

WebEx. Although teachers had difficulties communicating with students, further instruction was hindered by the inability to communicate timely and effectively. Considering the expanding number of professional development opportunities and the demand for quality training, Barnes et al. conducted a qualitative study that explored the opinions of 14 early childhood teachers regarding their training requirements and online learning preferences. Based on the findings of Barnes et al. (2018), professional development opportunities for early childhood teachers could contribute to improving the quality of care for students and thereby improve their health and well-being. According to Kraft et al. (2020), teachers were less likely to suffer a decline in self-confidence when they were placed in schools that communicated effectively, provided targeted professional development, recognized teachers' efforts, promoted meaningful collaboration, and held fair expectations during the pandemic.

Constantia et al. (2021) indicated that the major concern derived during distance learning was the appropriate management of teaching time, which was negatively affected by technical problems that occur during the lesson and were difficult to resolve since teachers were not familiar with the programs and devices used to deliver the course. According to Barnes et al. (2018), the growing use of technology-based and online courses could provide an excellent means of reducing barriers and increasing access to quality education. As Kim (2020) noted, it was imperative to plan for limitations that might arise in the future and to provide teachers with opportunities and skills for online teaching. Additionally, teachers will be able to reflect on how to use online communication tools to facilitate the development and learning of their students by

interacting with them through this medium. Kim suggested that teacher preparation programs should focus on improving the development of technology-based teaching skills. By using a questionnaire, Rashid et al. (2021) collected information about teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding using virtual learning environments (VLEs) as a teaching tool, and these data were validated by 178 teachers by using the Rasch framework. Rashid et al. found that the teachers were moderately ready to use a VLE and that they were accepting of its implementation. Rashid et al. concluded that teachers' acceptance of the VLE was affected by their readiness and perception of its usefulness and ease of use. Rashid et al. also found that the trend in education was to incorporate technology into teaching to attract 21st-century learners and that teachers will need to use technology-enhanced learning environments such as VLEs in their classrooms.

Readiness for Distance Learning in Schools

Asio and Bayucca (2021) identified preparation, competencies, funding, and devices for distance education as some of the challenges of moving to online teaching. According to Asio and Bayucca, one consideration of distance learning's efficiency was the school's readiness in terms of equipment and facilities, as well as its accessibility to various technologies. Barnett et al. (2021) asserted that teachers were expected to be actively engaged. For a better understanding of the consequences of pandemic-induced changes on early experiences for learning, development, and well-being, Barnett et al. emphasized the importance of assessing both experiences and outcomes. Gross and Opalka (2020) indicated that before the pandemic of COVID-19, creating quality remote learning plans would have ordinarily required months, if not years, of planning; however,

the crisis forced schools to present quality remote learning plans in a matter of weeks while maintaining equity and connectivity needs and providing resources. Asio and Bayucca found that schools were not prepared to implement distance learning due to inadequate learning materials, the lack of online mode facilities, insufficient funds to support alternative delivery methods, and low capacities for printing and distributing learning materials. Brock et al. (2021) noted the online teaching system was not a new phenomenon in the K-12 environment; nonetheless, for many schools forced to close physically, using it as the sole or primary mode of instruction was a challenging experience. Bergdahl and Nouri (2021) agreed that while some schools were unprepared for the transition into temporary distance education, i.e., less blended forms of instructional delivery, during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, experiences gained and lessons learned could be collectively evaluated and used to develop pedagogical plans, for use now and moving forward. Rabaglietti et al. (2021) recommended considering the current COVID-19 pandemic and possible future crises. It should be a priority to strengthen cross-sectoral skills such as self-efficacy that will reduce stress. Thus, research indicated that education leaders should provide teachers with training programs that will support their self-efficacy.

Connolly et al. (2019) pointed out that the preparation for online learning should not only include identifying the content that will be covered, but also considering how you will support the various forms of interaction that are integral to the learning process. According to Brock et al. (2021), to plan carefully for positive educational outcomes, education leaders may want to consider developing multiple variations of practicum

courses that consider the rapidly shifting landscape of K-12 education in the COVID-19 pandemic era. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, Barnett et al. (2021) examined the extent to which the pandemic affected policy and early childhood education practices across the nation by conducting a nationwide survey of parents, reviewing state policies, guidance, resource documents, and reviewing media coverage. Bergdahl and Nouri added that a future school preparedness plan should include a selection of digital tools that readily work for distance learning and should be considered by educational technology developers.

Connolly et al. (2019) stated that effective online learning resulted from careful instructional design and planning, using a systematic model for designing and developing an online learning course, which means the design process and the careful consideration of different design decisions can impact the quality of an online course. According to Barnett et al. (2021) research study, early learning systems needed to be reimagined and transformed to develop new ways to define early learning. In their report, Barnett et al. suggested that the consequence of the pandemic was a need for rethinking and transforming education systems. In a remote classroom, Barnett et al. indicated that it was important to understand and then respond to the needs of teachers while maintaining ongoing communication to establish a climate of mutual support. Based on Asio and Bayucca's (2021) findings, schools with limited technology were not prepared to implement online education, and virtual education could be successful in schools with adequate technology and support services. Barnett et al. found that technology's impact on learning, development, and well-being was likely to depend on how it was used since

these topics have been studied in the past, but they now take on more importance because of the current pandemic crisis involving the COVID-19 pandemic.

Morgan (2020) stated that American school districts began planning in February 2020 for the possibility that the COVID-19 pandemic would affect their communities and that many proposed to instruct children online if their districts were forced to discontinue face-to-face instruction because of the spread of the virus. Gross and Opalka (2020) pointed out that while some school districts struggled with connecting all students, they left the determination of the level of instruction and progress monitoring up to the discretion of schools and teachers, which resulted in highly varied learning experiences for their pupils. Pattnaik and Jalongo (2021) indicate that the perspectives represented in their study emphasized how ill-prepared or under-prepared nations were to support the care and education of children through the COVID-19 crisis. As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, Daniel (2020) guided teachers, education leaders, and officials regarding what preparations schools should make in the short amount of time available and how they should respond to the needs of students.

According to Quezada et al. (2020), there was a need for consistency in learning, and all educational institutions migrated to remote teaching while students remained at home. When developing an online program, Morgan (2020) recommended that schools should have guaranteed equal access to educational opportunities and communicate clearly with education leaders, teachers, and parents. To determine how early career teachers adapted to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, König et al. (2020) examined how teachers maintained social contact with students and became effective

teachers; they also investigated the school's computer technology, teacher competencies such as technological pedagogical knowledge, and opportunities for teacher education learning related to digital teaching and learning. A validated questionnaire was developed and used by Lapada et al. (2020) to examine teachers' awareness of the COVID-19 pandemic and their opinions concerning the readiness of their respective schools, in addition to their responses to the challenges associated with conducting distance learning. The study concluded that the teachers were highly aware of the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications. A study conducted by Kaden (2020) indicated that education leaders needed to reassess the nature and degree of the changes needed to facilitate educators' use of advancing technologies and students' development of the technical skills required for online learning.

Zhao (2020) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic, because of its disruptions to education, could inspire more schools to think of online teaching not as a lesser version of face-to-face teaching but as a different way to organize education. According to Kaden (2020), many teacher-education programs used the term "online" loosely to suggest that they must only employ multimedia tools and digital resources in their teaching; new teachers should be prepared in teacher training programs to deal with the rapidly growing number of online students and possess the pedagogy skills necessary for future blended learning models. Daniel (2020) suggested that while remote learning approaches differed between elementary schools and other grades of education, the need for technology training needed special attention. Gross and Opalka (2020) indicated that before the pandemic of COVID-19, creating quality remote learning plans would ordinarily require

months, if not years, of planning; however, the crisis forced schools to present quality remote learning plans in a matter of weeks while maintaining equity and connectivity needs and providing resources. Nisiforou and Vrasidas (2021) suggested that the education systems allocate additional resources in response to school closures and the pandemic's effects.

Policy Governing the COVID-19 Pandemic

Nasr (2020) and Jalongo (2021) both indicated that school districts all over the country announced what many educators expected; schools would cease traditional instruction in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bloom et al. (2020) and Daniel (2020) agreed that many governments forced schools to discontinue face-to-face instruction for most of their students and required that they switch to online teaching. Răducu and Stănculescu (2021) noted that training courses needed to be offered in a teaching-learning model for teachers who currently use traditional teaching-learning methods, as well as that district and school officials must prioritize the distribution of funds so that Experiential Learning is robust and implemented as designed.

According to Quezada et al. (2020), most stakeholders in the educational field were unprepared for the closure of schools because the United States Health Organizations, State Education Departments, and State Education Licensing Agencies collaborated on disseminating COVID-19 pandemic guidelines. Nisiforou and Vrasidas (2021) found that policymakers should consider addressing critical challenges regarding the implementation of online learning in future policy designs. According to Patrick et al. (2020), the coronavirus disease pandemic had a significant impact on parents and

children in the United States, suggesting that policymakers should consider additional measures to counteract the negative effects of the pandemic, taking into consideration the needs of families with children.

Stefan and Nazarov (2020) indicated that countries have adopted a policy of isolation by closing borders and acting quickly by restricting economic activity, isolating people at home, and avoiding physical interaction among them. As Daniel (2020) pointed out, most governments were playing catch-up to the exponential spread of COVID-19, so institutions had little time to prepare for a remote-teaching regime, and that preparation would include: Ensuring that students have access to tools they need to study at home, such as books. Kaden (2020) stated that school districts in the United States reacted to the pandemic in various ways depending on their location, infrastructure, financial resources, socioeconomic status, and community needs. Jalongo (2021) recommends that all stakeholders support global child advocacy efforts and encourage national governments to acknowledge that children's education and care should be a priority.

Daniel (2020) noted that many governments ordered schools to discontinue face-to-face instruction for most of their students, which required them to switch almost overnight to online teaching and virtual learning. Nasr (2020) stated that the realization that schools would be forced to remain closed because of government "safer at home" orders led to an increase in demand for educational technology tools necessary for the new distance learning models being adopted by school districts around the country. According to Gross and Opalka 2020, no American institution has been more burdened by the COVID-19 pandemic than the public school, which functions as childcare for

parents, an employer for nearly 7 million adults, and the primary provider of education for 90% of children ages 5 to 17. Oster et al. (2021) indicated schools' learning modes varied across states during the 2020-2021 school year, as schools transitioned back to in-person learning at different times, perhaps reflecting updated CDC guidance. Depending on many factors, such as location, infrastructure, financial resources, socioeconomics, and community needs, Kaden (2020) agreed that K–12 schools in the United States reacted to the pandemic in different ways. Oster et al. stated that the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) K–12 operational strategies offered schools a pathway for providing in-person instruction by implementing recommended prevention strategies, increasing vaccination rates, and reducing community transmission.

According to Beauchamp et al. (2021), education leaders' response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as their leadership of the subsequent changes, were influenced by factors beyond their control, including differences in national structures, mandates, support, and advice. Using the fact that every school district in the U.S. had to implement a reopening plan, Hartney and Finger (2020) explored what factors best predicted whether a district returned students to the classroom or educated them remotely. Pollock (2020) indicated that education leaders' leadership in the preceding decades was influenced by various factors, such as local context, policy, and program reform. Although these factors are still present today, the changes in schooling structure during the pandemic turned education leaders' attention to online learning and virtual school leadership. Hartney and Finger found that partisan politics were weakening nonpartisan local political institutions because they promoted partisan appeals that were anchored in

national debates instead of representing the specific needs of their local communities.

Hartney and Finger added that a stronger correlation between support for Republicans and the likelihood of school boards voting to hold in-person classes in districts that elect their boards was based on party affiliation. Hartney and Finger suggested that contrary to the conventional understanding of school districts as localized and non-partisan actors, political considerations impacted school district decision-making more than science.

Preparing Education for Future Pandemics

Bagwell (2020) claimed that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic provided the opportunity for school leaders to reexamine the possibility of integrating technology into distance education in an equitable manner for all students while simultaneously addressing the tension between student and faculty well-being and academic demands.

Brock et al. (2021) stated that primarily working with children in schools would always be the cornerstone of teacher education, yet it was a foundation that must now be expanded. Increased teacher capacity through online teacher practicum experiences and targeted instruction in online pedagogy can assist teachers to perform successfully in online environments and will be imperative to prepare for an uncertain future. Based on their assessment of school readiness and identification of perceived challenges involved in the delivery of distance learning, Asio and Bayucca (2021) wanted to provide information and evidence for education leaders and other school education leaders to use in their studies. Connolly et al. (2019) concluded that the primary objective in crisis circumstances should not be to recreate a robust educational ecosystem but rather to offer

temporary access to instruction and instructional support resources in a way that is easy to put in place and available reliably in an emergency.

Bagwell (2020) indicated that researchers should investigate how school leaders navigate through distress and uncertainty during this pandemic to support their faculty in embracing the need for change. According to Saxena and Saxena (2020), teachers and school education leaders should prepare for the future of education by developing online courses and promoting technology-based learning in their schools. Brocks et al. indicated that, in the hope that a crisis like COVID-19 does not occur again, educators should keep in mind that the COVID-19 crisis has yet to be resolved and continues to present logistical problems for schools, as some, if not all, teaching, and learning is conducted online. Using a case study, Reyes-Guerra et al. (2021) sought to examine how education leaders managed the compound crisis to develop a better description of the school leadership during COVID-19. Reyes-Guerra et al. found that a call to action for equity was the next logical step for system consideration and was echoed by education leaders that the return to old methods could no longer be considered. As Shirley et al. (2020) pointed out, an administrator's work is complex, involving strategy, culture, relationships, operations, and complex decision-making, which includes numerous factors and often contradictory viewpoints.

According to Roff (2021), schools should use the online experience during the pandemic to increase their level of preparedness for future events and by doing so, help children progress and grow during unforeseen events. Morgan (2020) noted that schools that choose to implement online learning would face challenges; however, by using

industry standards and articles published by prominent organizations like the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), these challenges will be mitigated, and schools and teachers will be guided on how to help students make academic gains. Bloom et al. (2020) stated that institutions and teachers will continue to search for flexible approaches to remedy the damage caused by COVID-19's interruptions to students' learning paths. Burns et al. (2020) argued that the shift to an online practicum presented a few opportunities, including the need to revise and re-examine the pedagogy of online learning. According to Morgan, as schools and teachers become more familiar with online education during this difficult period, they will likely learn valuable lessons that will assist them in managing future school closings. Roff indicated that the findings of his study may influence education leaders and faculty to be proactive in their use of technology, making it possible for educators to search for innovative ways to educate their students and that public school districts should survey and assess their successes and areas for improvement as identified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bloom et al. (2020) indicated that as online learning continued to grow in tertiary education, schools will organize themselves more systematically to focus on those aspects of technology-based learning which have been most beneficial. Bloom et al., and Danie (2020) both agreed that although educational institutions that normally deliver face-to-face instruction will likely return to that mode of instruction with some reassurance, the arrangements they made during the COVID-19 crisis will leave a lasting impact. Paradowski and Jelinska 2021 suggested that the COVID-19 crisis may be

viewed retroactively as an opportunity to restructure systems and become ready for future challenges strategically, and in the future, teachers may use online delivery in addition to traditional methods of teaching.

Zhao (2020) agreed because COVID-19 disruption to education, could inspire more schools to consider online education as not merely a lesser version of face-to-face instruction but as a different approach to educating students. Kaden (2020) noted that the sudden shift to online teaching led to the development of a more effective teaching approach. Zhao stated that because the damages associated with COVID-19 were incurable, there was the opportunity to rethink education, and the rethinking should not have focused on improving schooling but pay attention to what, how, and where to learn.

According to Constantia et al. (2021), during a world crisis, such as the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, partial decentralization of the educational system would be effective, which means that the administrator would have more administrative authority and, consequently, less bureaucracy, and the principal's responsibility could be enforced by the development of emotional intelligence to gain insight into others' feelings. Jelinska and Paradowski (2021) stated that while the pandemic had a detrimental impact on our lives and well-being, there was hope that the experience may lead to some unique insights and advancements for post-pandemic educational practices. Kaden (2020) noted that the future of education involved discussing equity issues and testing new ideas and models about the length of the school year and school days. He also included flexible scheduling, the costs of developing the proper technology infrastructure, what should and shouldn't be taught in virtual classrooms, and what new pedagogy skills teachers may

need. Metcalfe and Perez (2020) suggested that school leaders should focus on professional development for all teachers to build capacity in a virtual learning environment. School leaders should continue building networks, sharing best practices related to what is working in their schools, and collaborating with other instructional leaders to determine how they are tackling the challenges.

According to Patrick et al. (2020), there was little data on the impact of COVID-19 on both parents and children, despite concerns that both may be at risk for many of the problems associated with the pandemic. A study by Pollock (2020) indicated that to study leadership during a pandemic, researchers should inquire about what conditions must be in place to enable students to learn and how leaders will be able to support these conditions and satisfy them. Stefan and Nazarov (2020), in their study to evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the challenges and opportunities for education leaders, found that education leaders could take advantage of current strategic opportunities and impose new organizational responsibilities based on innovative use of new digital technology channels to continuously adapt to changing circumstances. Iivari et al. (2020) pointed out that to meet the needs of the youngest generation and their future digitalized world, schools and the education of children needed to undergo extensive digital transformations.

As stated by Răducu and Stănculescu (2021), the quality of early education had a profound impact on the development of the child's personality, attitudes, and values, which later be internalized and respected in adulthood. Iivari et al. (2020) agreed that children should be understood as well as allowed to shape the educational offerings in

higher education, but also aim at influencing the schooling of the young generation to equip them with valuable skills and competencies for their future digital lives, and to arouse their interest in this significant field. Zhao (2020) suggested that to avoid repeating the grammar of schooling, re-imagining should focus on creating the best educational opportunities for all children rather than on improving schools.

Summary and Conclusion

In Chapter 2, I reviewed research articles to address the COVID-19 pandemic, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on early childhood education, education leaders' challenges assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers' perceptions of technology use and online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, technology training needs for early childhood education teachers, school readiness on distance learning, an opportunity for change in education due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory was the start of the review. The framework provided an avenue in which the research problem could be explored. The following sections focused on themes related to the study problem and purpose. Whalen (2020) reported that the global COVID-19 pandemic revealed significant gaps in the preparation and training of teachers for remote teaching in emergencies, including the use of technology to ensure continuity of learning for students who are away from their schools. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the realization of school education leaders that most teachers were not experienced in online teaching and needed assistance with transitioning from face-to-face teaching to online teaching. The data collected in my study may lead to a better understanding of

transitioning to online teaching during an emergency or unprecedented event. My study may also lead to information on the importance of implementing online teaching as another form of learning.

In Chapter 3, I explained the methods that I used in my study to explore the gap in the literature on early childhood education leaders' challenges regarding K-3 teachers' transition to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapter 3 also included the research design and reason for selecting a basic qualitative design using semistructured interviews. I included my role as the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study is to explore early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K–3 teachers with the transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and what education leaders need to assist K–3 teachers with teaching online in the future. Asio and Bayucca (2021) indicated that working with education leaders to assist teachers' transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic is critical, as education leaders can effect changes in the education system. In Chapter 3, I discuss the research design and methodology, the instrumentation, my role as the researcher, procedures for recruitment, the data collection process, and the data analysis plan. Additionally, issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures were discussed.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions addressed in this basic qualitative study are as follows:

RQ1: What challenges did K-3 early childhood education leaders encounter when assisting teachers with transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2: What do early childhood education leaders think they need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future?

The phenomenon of interest in this study is early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K–3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching. Burns et al. (2020) reported that during school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers were prompted to move their instruction to online teaching. To examine this

phenomenon, I selected the basic qualitative research approach, which focuses on people's subjective views about the outside world (i.e., what they think about the issue and their experiences; Percy et al., 2015).

Qualitative research was a better option than quantitative research for understanding the experiences of early childhood education leaders in assisting K–3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching. Rubin and Rubin (2011) indicated that a basic qualitative research design involves understanding specific situations, individuals, or moments in time that are significant or revealing. In qualitative inquiry, Erickson (2011) explained, that researchers may use narrative reporting to discover and describe what individuals do in their everyday lives.

A case study might have been an option for this study, but I determined that interviews would suffice for data collection. According to Yin (2009), researchers adopting case study methodologies use a wide range of data sources, including direct observations, interviews, documents, artifacts, and other sources of information. Percy et al. (2015) stated that the purpose of a case study is to investigate in depth a “single case” by using multiple methods and different sources of information. I did not choose a case study because it would have required numerous sources of information, and only education leaders’ perspectives are needed to address the research questions.

I also considered phenomenological research as an option. A fundamental characteristic of phenomenology is the focus on the “lived experience” of psychological phenomena (Percy et al., 2015). According to Creswell (2016), phenomenological research entails analyzing a phenomenon with a group of individuals, and data are

generally collected by interviewing participants. Although the basic qualitative and phenomenology research designs are similar, a basic qualitative approach is most appropriate for this study.

Role of the Researcher

As an early childhood teacher during the COVID-19 pandemic, I observed the challenges that education leaders encountered in trying to develop ways that learning could continue despite the closure of many schools. My goal was to explore early childhood education leaders' perspectives on challenges in assisting K–3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the sole researcher, I was responsible for all aspects of the study. I created the interview questions and conducted semistructured interviews with each participant regarding their experiences assisting K–3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I was responsible for providing the participants with information and guidelines on the interview process. I was also required to schedule the interview dates and times agreed upon by the participants and me. It was my responsibility to conduct interviews that were safe and comfortable for both the interviewees and me.

I analyzed and interpreted the data as the researcher. I followed the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines regarding all ethical issues regarding participants' privacy, consent, and my conduct when contacting and interacting with the participants. Vulnerable individuals may not understand or be able to provide informed consent, or they may not have the power to refuse participation (Rubin &

Rubin, 2011). It was my responsibility to ensure that no vulnerable individuals participated in the study.

I maintained a personal journal for documenting my personal views, comments, and perceptions about the study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) indicated that, as opposed to memos written at select points throughout the research process and focused on a specific topic, a research journal is a continuous, real-time record of reflections, questions, and ideas as they develop over time. According to Ravitch and Carl, journals can be used to reflect, make meaning, and track ideas, thoughts, emotions, and concerns at the moment.

Whether a researcher is engaging in quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research, bias is inherent in all research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To limit biases, I avoided personal conversations with participants and only communicated with them regarding information about the study. I entered my identified biases into the journal before collecting data, during the interview process, and when analyzing the data. I revealed any personal and professional relationship with any of the participants with an emphasis on supervisory or instructor relationships involving power over the participants. I did not use any incentives to attract participants.

Methodology

This qualitative study was focused on exploring early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K–3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. I selected participants for this study from the Walden University participant pool and early childhood education leaders' social media groups.

Participant Selection

A minimum of 9 early childhood education leaders from various parts of the United States who held administrative positions during the COVID-19 pandemic were recruited for this study. For a researcher to demonstrate balance and thoroughness, they do not need to interview a large number of respondents if they demonstrate that they have explored alternative perspectives and evaluated them properly (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). I determined that 9 participants provided my study with adequate data. If, however, I did not reach saturation with 9 participants, I recruited more participants until this was achieved.

I used a purposeful sampling method for selecting initial participants for this study. An invitation was posted in the Walden University participant pool and early childhood education leaders' social media groups. The initial participants were selected from the Walden University participant pool and early childhood education leaders' social media groups.

I used a snowball sampling method to obtain enough participants to reach data saturation. A snowball sampling method, according to Ravitch and Carl (2016), involved starting with a small number of relevant and information-rich interviewees and then asking them for additional contacts who could provide relevant perspectives. I asked participants who had agreed to be in the study for recommendations of others who might have a different or confirming perspective on the topic.

Participants who had agreed to be in the study signed and submitted the consent form within a week of receipt. I communicated with each participant to decide the date

and time of their availability. Due to the ongoing routines after the COVID-19 pandemic, I conducted interviews via Zoom meetings.

Instrumentation

Data collection started after approval from the Walden University IRB.

Semistructured interviews were conducted to answer the research questions and understand the challenges faced by K–3 teachers transitioning to online teaching. In a semistructured interview, I, as the researcher, had a specific topic to explore, and I prepared research questions that were approved by a panel of experts in online teaching. According to Rubin and Rubin (2011), a limited number of questions should be developed in advance, and participants were invited to participate in member checking after data analysis.

Within the interviews, I used open-ended questions to obtain detailed responses from the participants. Interview questions with open-ended questions options allowed the interviewee to elaborate on answers, disagree with questions, or raise new issues (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). To solicit additional responses from participants, I used probes. I audio-recorded the interviews and listened carefully to the participants' responses. To enhance the content validity of the interview instrument, colleagues who had completed their doctoral programs advised me about the wording in the interview questions and questions that needed more clarity. I used their expert advice and created a valid instrument for obtaining the answers to the research questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Before proceeding with the recruitment of participants and data collection, I obtained approval from the Walden University IRB to ensure the participants' safety and proper guidance. After receiving approval from the IRB, I began recruiting participants from the Walden University participant pool and early childhood education leaders' social media groups to recruit at least nine early childhood education leaders who had held their positions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using the Walden University participant pool and early childhood education social media groups, I recruited a diverse group of participants. To increase the number of participants, I used the snowball sampling strategy by asking participants currently in the study to provide the names and contact information of education leaders who fit the study criteria. I continued this process until I had reached saturation.

I obtained participants' agreement to participate in the study using the consent form. I provided information on the study's details, what to expect, and participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time. The consent form included information about the study and sample interview questions. The sample interview questions gave the participants ideas about the questions they should have expected. Before participants participated in the study, they signed and returned the consent form. After I received the signed consent form from each participant, I scheduled a meeting with each participant to determine appropriate dates and times for the interview. Participants were also able to ask additional questions about the study.

To collect data, I developed interview questions based on the conceptual framework of experiential learning theory, the literature review, and the RQs (see Appendix A). As part of the data collection process, I created an interview protocol guide (see Appendix B). The interview protocol guide was used to inform the participants about the purpose of the study, ethical issues, and additional information related to interviews.

I scheduled a one-on-one interview with each participant for data collection. I audio-recorded and transcribed each interview to keep records and reference them in the future. I was responsible for advising participants that all their information would remain confidential and that their real names would be replaced with pseudonyms. I explained to each participant that I would provide a two-page summary of the study findings for them to read and provide comments or questions.

Data Analysis Plan

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the purpose of qualitative data analysis is to examine data systematically and intentionally throughout the research process at various stages and moments. I used the semistructured interview to collect data for this qualitative study. I collected and analyzed the interview responses from the participants to identify early childhood education leaders' experiences assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first data analysis process started with interviews that had been recorded and transcribed from the Zoom transcripts. I ensured that the interview transcripts accurately reflected the research questions and answers (see Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Reviewing the transcripts and repeatedly listening to the recordings, I made all necessary corrections and documented

them. I printed a copy of the completed transcripts for review to identify any errors or omissions. After making all the corrections to the transcripts, I protected them by saving the electronic copy on a password-protected external drive. I saved the hard copy in a protected, locked file container (see Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

I used open coding for the initial data analysis process after reading the transcript thrice. I read each data line in open coding to accurately code relevant keywords and phrases (see Saldaña, 2016). To differentiate the codes, I used different color highlighters (see Ravitch and Carl (2016). Rubin and Rubin (2016) indicated that codes define, locate, and mark text topics containing relevant concepts, themes, examples, names, places, and dates.

I used axial coding to identify categories and subcategories within the codes. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), in axial coding, chunks of data are coded and grouped into coding categories or clusters. I recorded all steps in the coding process to ensure validation. I identified emerging themes by examining categories. The themes also answered the research questions. To validate the coded data, I analyzed and recorded the data to determine missing information and generated additional subthemes (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Ravitch and Carl recommended that the development process be transparent and documented to validate the coded data further. I secured the final revised hard copy coded data and any notes related to the data in a locked file. I saved the electronic data on a computer and protected it with a password. A research study's credibility and dependability were proven by carefully examining and analyzing discrepant data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The discrepancy in data allowed me to introduce

a different idea to the study that is not intended to refute it but to strengthen it with opposing evidence.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Ravitch and Carl (2016) indicated that qualitative researchers must adhere to different standards to incorporate trustworthiness. Qualitative researchers develop validity approaches aligned with their research questions, goals, and contexts (Ravitch & Carl). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability influence trustworthiness (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Credibility

By carefully recording what participants see and hear, Rubin and Rubin (2011) indicated that participant observation extends the interview process. I recorded the interviews using an audio recorder and took notes during each interview to capture every detail, including the participants' body language and observations. I achieved credibility by showing that I had spoken with individuals knowledgeable about the research topic (see Rubin & Rubin). I ensured that the report was transparent to allow the reader to examine the thoroughness of the research design and the researchers' conscientiousness, sensitivity, and bias (see Rubin & Rubin). After analyzing the data, participants were able to participate in member-checking by sharing a two-page summary of the study findings.

Transferability

According to Ravitch and Carl's (2016) definition, transferability refers to the capability of qualitative research to be applied to broader contexts while maintaining its usefulness in the original context. Achieving transferability involved providing detailed

descriptions of the data and their context (also known as thick descriptions) so readers/research audiences can compare them to other situations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I provided a thick description, which provides an in-depth, detailed description of the data and the context. To work toward the transferability criteria, I offered a detailed description of the data collected and the method used in the study. This study may allow readers to transfer the specifics of the study design to their experiences.

Dependability

To ensure dependability, the researcher can triangulate and sequence the methods and develop a well-articulated rationale for your choices to confirm that you have created the appropriate data collection plan. To achieve dependability, I reasonably explained how the data were collected and followed the appropriate protocols (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), researchers must have a reasoned argument for how the data were collected, which implies that the data were reliable because they provided answers to the research questions.

Confirmability

Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggested that the researcher should periodically review responses to interview questions throughout the study using memos or dialogic engagement exercises for accuracy and bias. The Zoom application I used helped produce accurate transcriptions. I recorded and transcribed the interviews with participants word for word. I manually coded my data. I addressed confirmability by using reflexivity while writing in a reflective journal. I made journal entries about biases during data collection and analysis to help me address bias.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures were followed in this study. I addressed ethical concerns related to recruitment materials and processes. I posted the invitation to participate in the study on the Walden University Participant Pool and social media groups. I sent interested participants a consent form and they sent me an email stating “I consent.” I sent a follow-up email to see if the participants submitted their consent forms. I sent an email after 48 hours to remind prospective participants who may still be interested in participating in the study.

Before data collection, I ensured participants that their information was safe and protected. I advised participants that they could be excused or exempted from the interview at any time. Participants could refuse to answer specific questions or reschedule the interview for a different date and time. Participants had the option to take breaks when they felt the need to. Participants' identifications were removed and replaced with pseudo-names to protect their identities.

For security and confidentiality, I was the only one reviewing the data. The data is stored on my personal password-protected computer, ensuring that I am the only one that can access the data.

Summary

Ravitch and Carl (2016) indicated that qualitative research conducted through interviews poses unique ethical challenges. In Chapter 3, I provided information about the rationale for the study, the research design, and the role of the researcher. In this chapter, I also discussed the methodology for this basic qualitative study. Other

components included the semistructured, one-on-one interviews conducted to collect data. I discussed the process of participant selection, instrumentation, ethical procedures for recruitment, and the data analysis plan. I also included issues of trustworthiness which consisted of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I discuss the results in Chapter 4, including the data collection, data analysis, and the evidence of trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with the transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and what education leaders needed to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future. The research questions addressed in this basic qualitative study were:

RQ1: What challenges did K-3 early childhood education leaders encounter when assisting teachers with transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2: What do early childhood education leaders think they need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future?

In this chapter, an overview of the results of the study is presented along with a description of the methodology used to collect data. I address the setting, demographics, methods used to contact and obtain participants, how the data were collected, the analysis, and the findings of the study.

Setting

I conducted nine open-ended interviews over Zoom with early childhood education leaders who were in a leadership position during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2019 to 2022. I used the Walden University Participant Pool, early childhood social media groups, and snowball sampling to recruit participants. Participants were from rural and urban areas in the United States and each participant had a leadership position at an early childhood education center or school. Participants' roles, during the time of the

COVID-19 pandemic, were to assist teachers with transitioning to online teaching. To provide confidentiality, an alpha numeric identification number was assigned to each participant. There were no personal or organizational conditions that affected the gathering or the analysis of the data.

Demographics

Table 1 summarizes the participants' titles, the type of center or school they worked for, and their gender.

Table 1

Research Participants

Research Participant	Title	Private/Public School	Gender
T1	Administrator	Public	Female
T2	Administrator	Private	Female
T3	Principal	Public	Female
T4	Lead Teacher	Public	Female
T5	Principal	International	Female
T6	Lead Teacher	Public	Female
T7	Director	Grant Funded	Female
T8	Principal	Public School	Female
T9	Principal	Public School	Male

Data Collection

After receiving Walden University IRB approval (#05-30-23-0661333), I began recruiting participants by posting my invitation to the Walden participant pool and early

childhood education leaders' social media groups. The participants who were interested in the study emailed me using their work email. This allowed me to determine that the prospective participants were educators, and I communicated with them using these email addresses to verify that they met the study criteria. To increase the number of participants, I also used snowball sampling. I collected data until I reached data saturation.

Participants who expressed interest in participating in the study were sent a copy of the consent form for review. Participants were required to respond "I consent" to show that they consented to participate in the study. The consent form included brief information about the study, what to expect during the interview, and sample interview questions. A total of nine participants were recruited and participated in open-ended, semistructured interviews. All nine participants agreed to use Zoom for the interview process.

I welcomed and thanked each participant at the beginning of each interview. I introduced myself and reviewed the informed consent document that each participant had agreed to in their emails with the words "I consent." I explained the duration expected and that I would be taking notes during the interview and provided information about the purpose of the study, and assured participants that their information would remain confidential, and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time or for any reason. At the beginning of the interview, I asked each participant the three demographic questions and clarified that they were early childhood leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that they assisted K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching. The

interview questions commenced after the demographic questions; all participants were asked the questions in the same order. The interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes, and the data collection process took 19 weeks to complete.

A reflective journal was used for each interview to capture my thoughts to manage biases (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I also used the journal to document comments from participants that I used later for clarification during data analysis. After the interview, I thanked each participant for their contribution and explained that I would provide a 2-page summary of the study findings after the analysis was completed. The audio recordings and the transcripts are stored on my password-protected home computer. The data collected will be destroyed after 5 years per Walden University protocol.

Data Analysis

For this basic qualitative study, I explored early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with the transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and what education leaders need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future.

Phases 1 and 2: Familiarizing Myself with the Data and Generating Codes

I used Zoom for both the audio recordings and transcriptions of participants' interviews. After collecting interview data, I listened and compared the audio recordings with the transcripts and my notes numerous times for clarity and accuracy. I also used this process to familiarize myself with data collected from each participant. As I listened and read, I identified open codes by highlighting the key words and phrases that early

childhood education leaders used in answering the interview questions. Education leaders described challenges they experienced while assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These leaders also answered interview questions by identifying what they needed to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future. After highlighting the codes from each transcript, I entered the code used by each participant into an Excel spreadsheet. From this process, 105 open codes were identified. These codes were then collapsed as patterns were recognized and the codes fit into categories. categories. Table 2 represents the nine open codes that were found in analysis of the data.

Table 2*Examples of Open Codes*

Code	Participant	Expert
Change	P1	“Change in itself is a challenge.”
	P6	“Teachers didn’t want to change.”
Hybrid	P3	“Teachers have to teach students online as well as hybrid.”
	P4	“Through 2021, we went hybrid, some students were online, and some were in person.”
Education gap	P4	“They've been at home without structure, when they got back into their school routine it was hard for the kiddos to adjust.”
	P5	“Students who for a year and a half did absolutely nothing, and then come back that next.”
Limited knowledge of technology.	P4	“The other challenge was lack of knowledge for teachers and online learning.”
	P1	“Teachers felt like they did not have the technology training to be able to support this and support virtual and online teaching.”
Administrative communication with teachers	P1	“I would hold team leader meetings online; we would discuss with the teachers needed.”
	P4	“We did have almost daily team meetings on different resources through our technology department.”
More PD is needed	P2	“I would love more professional development time with the teachers to help them feel confident in what they're doing to help students.”
	P3	“We need to train our teachers on how to make lessons online and how to reach out to our students.”
Distribution of technology and Wi-Fi	P2	We had technology to distribute at the beginning of the year.
	P5	“We tried to get them Internet if they needed it.”
Grace and understanding for teachers.	P9	“We need to give our teachers grace and understand what the teachers are going through.”
	P3	“Teachers should give themselves grace.”
Planning/Preparing	P9	“We're going to need you to be pretty equipped, or we're going to need you to be flexible and knowledgeable on how to navigate Zoom and how to navigate the canvas.”
	P5	“They put together materials for the families, books and worksheets and other things that the student could be doing without being online or on a computer.”

After identifying the open codes, I reviewed, examined, and organized the open codes to identify the connections and relationships the codes had with each other. I created another Excel spreadsheet, and I started the axial coding by sorting the open codes into similar categories. Table 3 represents the seven categories generated from the codes.

Table 3

Examples of Open Codes and Categories

Category	Open Code	Participant Identifier	Excerpt
Challenges transitioning to remote learning.	Change	P7	"We had a little bit of warning, but not a lot of warning."
		P6	"Teachers didn't want to change."
		P1	"Teachers felt like they did not have the technology training to be able to support this and support virtual and online teaching."
Learning gap	Limited skills and training	P4	"The other challenge was lack of knowledge for teachers and online learning."
		P5	"We are seeing kids that are so behind when you're a kindergartner, and you are being taught how to hold a pencil on by way of Zoom."
		P8	"Students who for a year and a half did absolutely nothing, and then come back that next year, they're a year and a half behind, if not more."
Professional Development	Providing PD for teachers with limited or no knowledge of technology.	P8	"We need to train our teachers on how to make lessons online and how to reach out to our students."
	Teachers' training	P5	"We're going to have to implement training to make sure everybody's getting equitable education."
Challenges rotate between in-person and hybrid	Hybrid	P6	"It was, hard we had to be online and teach in person at the same time."
		P4	"Through 2021, we went hybrid, some students were online and some were in person."
	Online learning	P1	"I would hold team leader meetings online; we would discuss with the teachers needed."
		P5	"We're going to have to implement training to make sure everybody's getting equitable education."
Support for Teachers	Grace and understanding for teachers	P9	"We need to give our teachers Grace and understand what the teachers are going through."
		P3	"Teachers should give themselves grace."
		P8	"Starting with the Admin team being prepared, but also having the same message and letting teachers know we're in this together."
Preparing for remote learning in the future	Collaboration of Stakeholders	P9	"Communicating with all stakeholders about future plans."
		P7	"Making sure we have all materials and supplies ready ahead of time."
		P3	"We need to train our teachers on how to make lessons online and how to reach out to the students."

Phases 3–6: Searching for Themes, Reviewing Themes, Defining and Labeling Themes, and Producing the Report

After axial coding, I grouped the categories that shared identical or similar meanings. After this process, five temporary themes emerged: (a) early childhood education leaders were challenged to transition to online teaching, (b) early childhood education leaders must communicate with teachers during online teaching, (c) teachers need emotional support and resources from early childhood education leaders to teach online, (d) early childhood education leaders need help providing resources and supporting students and parents when teaching and learning are online, and (e) early childhood education leaders have strategies to use during future academic disruptions. These themes answered the research questions, though I made some adjustments to the themes that were represented to ensure they answered the research questions. Three themes emerged that answered RQ 1, and two themes emerged to answer RQ 2. Table 4 includes the axial codes that made up the final themes. For the last phase, I finalized the analysis of the themes with supporting evidence.

Table 4*Themes and Axial Codes or Categories*

Themes	Axial Codes or Categories
Theme 1: Early childhood education leaders encounter challenges and successes in providing resource and emotional support to teachers during online teaching.	Grace and understanding for teachers. Support for teachers. A limited supply of technology Planning and Preparation
Theme 2: Early childhood education leaders perceive addressing challenges in communication with all stakeholders is essential during and following the transition to online teaching.	Administrative communication with teachers Professional Development Challenges to transition to remote learning
Theme 3: Early childhood education leaders were challenged to keep students focused and bridge the educational gap caused by online learning.	Learning gap
Theme 4: Early childhood education leaders need help providing resources and supporting students and parents when transitioning to online learning.	Support for families Providing resources for families
Theme 5: Early childhood education leaders have strategies to use during future academic disruptions.	Preparing for remote learning in the future. Formulate plans.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), qualitative researchers must follow different standards to incorporate trustworthiness. Ravitch and Carl stated that qualitative

researchers build validity approaches aligned with their research questions, goals, and contexts credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability influence trustworthiness. I employed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to provide evidence of issues of trustworthiness.

Credibility

It is important to ensure that the study is credible in qualitative research to ensure it is measuring accurately what the study claims. By carefully recording what participants see and hear, Rubin and Rubin (2011) indicated that participant observation extends the interview process. To confirm credibility, I recorded and transcribed interviews, and kept a reflective journal. I recorded the interviews using an audio recorder and took notes during each interview to capture every detail, including the participants' body language. I achieved credibility by member-checking where I shared a two-page summary of the study findings after analyzing the data.

Transferability

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), transferability refers to the capability of qualitative research to be applied to broader contexts while maintaining its usefulness in the original context. To achieve transferability, I provided detailed descriptions of the data and their context so readers can compare them to other situations or phenomena. To establish transferability, I provided a detailed description of the data collected and the method used in the study.

Dependability

As per Ravitch and Carl (2016), achieving dependability in research requires a clear explanation of how the data was collected and how the appropriate protocols were followed. In my study, I used a standardized interview questions protocol, wherein each participant was asked the same questions in the same order. To ensure dependability, I recorded each interview and transcribed it word-for-word, thereby demonstrating the accuracy of my data collection. It is important to have a well-reasoned argument for how the data was collected and that the data is consistent with conclusions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), ensuring reliability in research necessitates a transparent description of how the data was gathered and the adherence to appropriate protocols. In my investigation, I utilized a standardized protocol of interview questions, wherein each participant was posed the same questions in the same sequence. To establish reliability, I meticulously recorded each interview and transcribed it verbatim, thus proving the precision of my data collection. It is crucial to have a well-founded justification for the methodology employed and to ensure the coherence of the data with your argument (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I made it clear to the participants that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the interview at any point.

Confirmability

Ravitch and Carl (2016) argued that confirmability recognizes and explores biases and prejudices in data interpretation using a structured reflective process. Confirmability

is also about using reflexivity or writing in a reflective journal making notes on bias and any other issues that come up in data collection and analysis. To ensure confirmability, I did not reflect on my beliefs about early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I reviewed responses to interview questions throughout the study referencing my notes and memos. The Zoom application I used recorded, and I transcribed the interviews with participants.

Results

The purpose of this study was to explore early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this section, I explain the data I collected and the five themes that answered the research questions. The five themes were: (a) teachers need emotional support and resources from early childhood education leaders to teach online, (b) early childhood education leaders must communicate with teachers during online teaching, (c) early childhood education leaders were challenged to keep students focused and bridge the educational gap caused by online learning, (d) early childhood education leaders need help providing resources and supporting students and parents when teaching and learning are online, and (e) early childhood education leaders have strategies to use during future academic disruptions.

Research Question 1

RQ 1 was "What challenges did K-3 early childhood education leaders encounter when assisting teachers with transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19

pandemic?” All nine participants explained their experiences and challenges assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were closed, and online learning was put into effect. Most participants explained that teachers’ limited knowledge of technology was a major challenge. Participants also expressed their challenges using social media to communicate with the students and their parents. Further, most families lacked the resources and technology needed for effectively implementing online learning. Participants described how they had to communicate and conduct daily meetings with the teachers through various media to address challenges and strategies for transitioning to online teaching. One participant expressed his frustration in providing teachers with strategies and suggestions who did not embrace or welcome them.

Theme 1: Early Childhood Education Leaders Encounter Challenges and Successes in Providing Resource and Emotional Support to Teachers during Online Teaching.

During the interviews, many of the participants expressed the frustration, stress, anxiety, and mental fatigue their teachers were experiencing as they prepared to transition to online learning. P5 shared,

I had several teachers retire during this time because they just weren’t willing to take on that challenge that we demanded a little bit too much of their time. After all, it turned into such a scheduled nightmare trying to service parents and students throughout the day that they didn’t feel like some of the requests that leadership was making were realistic in their day-to-day lives.

To help address some of these issues, P1 stated,

I was visual in the classroom, so I would go in and out of classrooms to make sure my face was there to provide support. I helped to monitor the chat, so I would help to respond to parents when they placed comments in the chat, and then I also set up virtual administrative time so that I could help resolve and be a buffer so that the staff and the teacher didn't have to deal with that doing instruction.

The participants also expressed that they needed to provide support and empathy for their teachers. P7 explained,

There were a lot of trainings about, you know stress relief for the staff and things like that. so that you could help them deal with some of the stressors that were going on. So a lot of facilities had those types of webinars and trainings and things like that, things you could talk about. Also, there were trainings on making sure that you were inclusive in the online environment. So those were some good trainings as well.

P1 said,

We first started by giving everybody a Google Classroom. and then we created a schedule where teachers could come in to record lessons, using their document cameras and their laptops, the administrative team had to step in and just help where we could alleviate that stress. We made sure that our counselor was available to them, too, you know, especially for those days, and they felt just really kind of helpless.

Our counselors led social-emotional activities where the teachers would still do scavenger hunts to find certain things in a house. We would have virtual dance parties. So

we work that every day looks different than the face-to-face day. But we felt that there was a need for us to add in more of those types of supports.

P8 added, “I had a very strong team of instructional coaches.” P2 also noted, And so the administrative team had to step in and just help where we could do to alleviate that stress. And so, if that meant shortening what our objectives were for that year, understanding that there were going to be educational gaps regardless.

P9 shared that:

And you’re trying to pick and probe in terms of like, hey, are you okay, like, how are you doing? How are you holding up? Do you need anything like, but it’s like I could do that in terms of like, if I’m in the if I’m in the building, hey? What do you need? What's going on, I can just say, “Oh, you need me to step in for a minute for you to step out and take a break?”

P4 stated that they met with the teachers to help them with their daily rosters on what lessons the students had for the day and if the family had internet access for online learning.

Participants also noted that teachers depended on each other for emotional support. P3 claimed,

My teachers were close to each other, and so they did a good job of supporting one another. you know. like if a teacher would say. I don’t understand how to do such and such. And another teacher would say, “Hey, after the staff meeting, let’s stay online and let me anybody that wants to learn how to do this. I can walk you through step by step.

The participants agreed that they used some form of communication to support each other. The participants realized that the teachers were frustrated and needed emotional support.

In this theme, the participants agreed that they needed to provide teachers with emotional and physical support. The participants showed empathy to their teachers and provided professional help to alleviate the stress of transitioning to online learning. The participants acknowledged that the teachers did not only have to deal with the children but also with the parents.

Theme 2: Early Childhood Education Leaders Perceive Addressing Challenges in Communication with all Stakeholders is Essential During and Following the Transition to Online Teaching

For a successful transition to online learning, participants stated that there should be communication between the leadership, teachers, parents, and students using scheduled and unscheduled meetings to inform all stakeholders about upcoming plans, strategies, solutions, feedback, and information required for online learning. One important reason for conducting meetings was because the COVID-19 pandemic brought fear and anxiety. Education leaders, teachers, and parents were unable to meet in person not wanting to get the virus or spread it to their families. P5 stated,

People didn't want to meet in person due to fears of spreading the virus. And so, there were a lot of video meetings and phone calls and I tried to specify my communications and emails and shared documents a lot so that people could refer to things as we were generating procedures to go forward.

P1 expressed how their meetings and communications were conducted: “And then there was communication and writing, as well as which steps they needed to take to be able to get started with the virtual school.” P7 similarly claimed,

You know, we just had an initial meeting to see exactly what we would do and what exactly. And then everybody was always given an agenda of what to discuss. So, we already knew what would be discussed. Everybody comes to the table with their ideas and things like that, every and always at the end. There are always questions and things like that across the board.

P3 shared, “We would get online and just have conversations so that teachers could help other teachers.” P5 explained “So we prepared, we tried to have as clear communication and as much communication as possible. There were phone calls, team meetings with how to do things.” There were many communications and meetings held by the leadership team and various forms of media were used. P4 added, “We were taught, you know, how to reach families through class Dojo does through different programs and how to set up our Schoology. All of it will be online with Schoology for our kids.” P8 said,

The teachers did a phenomenal job, and then, as administrators, we would send out a system in our district called Blackboard Connect. And so, it sends out phone messages and it also sends them as email messages or text messages.

P8 also expressed, “Well, we had a ton of Zoom Meetings as administrators with the district. We were on almost every day.” P6 said,

We would meet online, and we would have team meetings online and we would discuss the challenges and then we would share some suggestions that maybe worked in our classrooms with each other. And that was about it because we couldn't meet face-to-face in person, it was just mostly communicating through technology.

Based on this theme, communication was an essential tool early education leaders needed to provide information and instructions to the teachers, students, and families. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the stakeholders could not meet face-to-face to share and discuss ideas and strategies relating to students' performance and progress. The participants used different communication methods for meetings and to share ideas such as Zoom, telephone, email, Schoology, and DoJo.

Theme 3: Early Childhood Education Leaders were Challenged to Keep Students Focused and Bridge the Educational Gap Caused by Online Learning

Participants described their different challenges in assisting their teachers with transitioning to online learning. All the participants acknowledge that they encountered various challenges because they had a short time to transition to online learning. The participants indicated that they lacked the technology skills to keep the students focused during online learning. The lack of technology and limited technology training for teachers contributed to the learning gap. P4 stated: "I can say that they were not knowledgeable about technology. A lot of us were not knowledgeable." P2 stated "There was panic in some that did not know the technology." Participants' challenges transitioning to online learning included the lack of technology needed for teaching

online. Some participants acknowledged that many schools were not previously equipped with the necessary technology and resources needed for all the teachers and students to implement online learning. P6 indicated that: “We did not have the technology that we needed to teach successfully on the computer.” As teachers had to teach their students online from their home or the school, it was a challenge getting the students focused, especially the much younger students. P4:

Getting an entire class to pay attention at this level with online learning was very challenging to get a 3- to 5-year-old to sit for online learning. The biggest thing was how to keep them engaged when they were at home in their home environment, and it was time for school. Learning from home made the students less interested in learning because they were focused more on fun things in their surroundings at home.

P5 expressed: “How are we going to teach 5- and 6-year-olds who have very short attention spans, what they need to know so that they can come back and be successful the next year? So that was difficult.” P8: stated, “You know, we saw kindergartners, kindergartners were hanging off their chairs and spinning.” P8 said, “The teachers were challenged with the fact that the kids didn’t follow through at home.” Some leaders struggled with getting parents to be less involved and limit interference during online class time. P8 indicated that:

Another challenge was getting parents off the devices because they wanted to be in the class. And we had parents that didn’t work, they were looking for jobs. So

now they have their kids home that they have to supervise their kids, and they have to supervise their learning.

During the pandemic, all the stakeholders are stressed and trying to figure out the best strategies to successfully implement online learning. P9 stated:

And so, you kind of got pushed back from teachers and just like trying to coach them through change, which was a challenge. I am an expert at anything, that's why I struggled, too, because I tried to control everything my first year and second year, and I was like, I can't control anything, but my actions. And so, I think, like knowing that you can't control everything.

P9 was the only male in a leadership position that I interviewed. From his responses to the questions, he wanted to control the situation and what his teachers did. P9 shared his reactions to teachers' comments that they did not want his assistance. P8 had a similar challenge when monitoring teachers as they worked online, stating "I think one of the hardest things was the administrators now observing teachers online."

Grading and assessment of students through online learning was also viewed as a challenge. Some participants found it difficult to know how to grade students for work they submitted online. As for replacing physical, face-to-face teaching with online teaching, P8 indicated "We are seeing kids that are so behind when you're a kindergartner, and you are being taught how to hold a pencil on by way of zoom. That's very hard." P6 explained:

So, they would get bored, and they would wander off, and there, you'd call them back. And it was just hard to keep the kids at the computer working, or they'd get

frustrated because they needed help. And no one was there to help them physically hold the pencil, cut the paper, things like that. So that was hard for them.

The theme emerged from the participant's experiences of the challenges to keep students focused and to bridge the educational gap caused by online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the participants lacked technology knowledge, were not well experienced in online learning, and did not feel they could effectively conduct learning online. The participants found it a challenge to keep the students focused and attentive to participate in what was being taught. Conducting online learning created a gap in learning because some students needed the physical presence of the teachers. The students missed most of the assigned lessons and activities paying attention to other things around their homes.

Research Question 2

RQ 2: What do early childhood education leaders think they need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future? During the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants experienced many challenges with assisting teachers transitioning to online learning. The participants needed to provide emotional support and counseling for the teachers in the future. The participants needed to provide adequate technology and training for teachers to successfully conduct online learning. The participants were expected to show empathy and understanding for the teachers.

Theme 4: Early Childhood Education Leaders Need Help Providing Resources and Supporting Students and Parents when Transitioning to Online Learning

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, parents, and students were all going through a difficult time and needed support from the education leaders and teachers. Most of the parents lacked the knowledge needed to assist their children with online learning. The students did not have the discipline and patience to sit at a computer for hours learning.

P3 stated:

The parents could call in or fill out an online form or call in if they needed additional Wi-Fi, and my secretary could enter that into the student system for what the child needed. And then we had a couple of staff members who were responsible for distributing it, and if something wasn't working, recollecting, and sometimes being on the phone with a parent to guide them on how to set it up. So, the district provided online training for parents, students, and teachers. The teachers were getting a lot of training.

P9 explained the assistance she and her staff provided to the parents like sending the families packages with activities for the students. P2 said that they provided resources that teachers delivered to families. P3 discussed how some of their teachers drove to the homes of the students to provide Chromebooks and laptops for the families.

P2 also shared, “Just because there was no accessibility, we issued laptops and Chrome books to families who did not have them.” P5 indicated that they put together materials for families like books, worksheets and other items that the students could be doing without being online or on the computer.

The participants provided tutoring services for children who had difficulties with learning to read. P3 said, “If the first-grade teacher said a student was struggling with reading, then we made sure that there was an instructional assistant that may be working with that child.” P2 stated that some families were offered tutoring options for their children. P4 claimed, “So what we did was we had our teachers reach out to other families via class dojo or by calling to let them know that their classes will be online and how to log in. We would sit and talk to families all day, on how to transition.” P4 shared

So, what we did was we had our teachers reach out to other families via class dojo or by calling to let them know that their classes will be online and how to log in.

We would sit and talk to families all day, on how to transition.

P8 stated that the parents went through the carpool line and checked out devices, and packets within four days. P1 explained:

We organized the drive-through service at a local church in the community, and we would be there at certain times, and we sent out like blast where families could come to drive by and we would wave, and they could pick up different things like diapers, toilet paper, anything they needed for their children and their homes, and we made that a few times a week.

P6 stated that sometimes the families would pick up supplies from the school. P6 also mentioned that they and the teachers would deliver computers and packets to families who did not have them. The participants were very helpful to the families providing them the supplies and services they needed for transitioning to online learning. Some participants cared so much about the students they took the time to deliver the

packages themselves. The participants provided special training for families who did not have much knowledge about assisting their children with online learning.

Theme 5: Early Childhood Education Leaders Have Strategies to use During Future Academic Disruptions

Participants provided strategies, suggestions, and ideas on how to address an education disruption, such as a pandemic, in the future. The participants provided their personal experiences on strategies that were successful in working with teachers, students, and parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants explained that working as a team and being there for each other helped to make the transition less challenging.

Participants expressed their views that no one wants or expects another pandemic or a disruption that will lead to a mandatory transition to online learning. Participants provided important strategies and solutions that could be implemented during another pandemic that may cause the closing of schools. P1 indicated that “In case we end up going into something like this again, they feel like they have the technology training to be able to support this and support virtual and online teaching.” P1 also added that “I think, being there for that socio-emotional support is so important. And realizing that they're human. not just like employees.” P2 commented that “Flexibility? I think that’s an amazing one, how to be flexible with technology can be frustrating for some people so, be flexible and knowing that is going to take some time to know it.” P3 indicated building more on collaboration and collegiality among our teams because all members of society will have to be involved during another outbreak of COVID. P6 also suggested

that participants and teachers should be flexible, they should have fun. P6 said, “I have dressed up in so many costumes to keep the students engaged and interactive, so you have to be flexible and creative.”

According to P5, “I would love to see some type of state program or regulated standard for online learning that could be a little more equitable throughout the state.” P5 also commented, “A little more structured program for online learning.” P2 indicated that “If there was another disruption, participants should give themselves grace and not be afraid to ask for help. For even our little ones. I would suggest that teachers and leaders meet with other schools and work together.” P5 also said,

I think we need a lot, not just the teachers. I think everybody needs to train parents on what online learning looks like. We need to train our students on, what does online look learning looks like. We need to train our teachers on how to make lessons online and how to reach out to our students.

Organizing the lessons and activities in advance will provide more time to focus on teaching. P3 suggested that students should be provided with technology to help them be independent. P8 commented “Create the curriculum, and then we also put emergency plans in place very early, working together as a team. And the team had to start at the school level.” P4 indicated that the biggest thing is to know and understand that the students that we served before Covid are not the same students after Covid, and we have to adjust to their level.

Participants provided strategies for transitioning to online learning in the future by suggesting that there should be technology available and training for all stakeholders

needed for transitioning to online learning. The participants suggested that flexibility is essential for transitioning to online learning. Participants advised that patience, understanding, support, and empathy should be considered when assisting teachers transition to online learning.

Discrepant Cases

Throughout the data analysis process, I did not find evidence that contradicted the findings; therefore, further analysis was not necessary. Relating to, school leaders shared examples of the assistance and emotional support they provided to teachers. Overall, most participants expressed their views that school leaders did not provide substantial support to the teachers. P1 was the only participant who provided counseling services to their teachers. Theme 2 early childhood education leaders perceive addressing challenges in communication with all stakeholders is essential during and following the transition to online teaching. This theme was supported by participants who shared their methods used for communicating with their teachers and other stakeholders. The participants perceived communicating with all stakeholders, including teachers and families, is essential for informing all parties on upcoming events, activities, and important information. Theme 3 referred to the participants' strategies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic for transitioning to online. These strategies were helpful and made the transition more manageable. Theme 4 was supported by participants who shared the support they needed to provide to the students and their families. The participants indicated the services and assistance they provided to the families were helpful, providing families with the tools

needed for working online. The participants provided training and emotional support to the families who were struggling with the process of transitioning to online learning.

Theme 5 was supported by participants who provided strategies for a successful outcome when transitioning to online learning in the future. The participants explained how the strategies they implemented were helpful and that it would make transitioning to online learning less challenging in the future.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I analyzed data from open-ended, semi-structured interviews with nine early childhood education school leaders to arrive at the findings from my study. Two research questions guided the study, which explored early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Chapter 4, I explained how purposive and snowball sampling were used to recruit participants from various parts of the United States of America. I explained how Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis was used to familiarize oneself with the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review and define themes, name the themes, and produce the final report to identify the categories and the emerging themes.

I explained the coding processes to find the following themes: (a) Early childhood education leaders provide different levels of resource and emotional support to teachers during online teaching. (b) Early childhood education leaders must communicate with teachers during online teaching, (c) Early childhood education leaders were challenged to keep students focused and bridge the educational gap caused by online learning. (d) Early

childhood education leaders need help providing resources and supporting students and parents when teaching and learning is online, (e) Early childhood education leaders have strategies to use during future academic disruptions.

I explained how the five themes answered the two research questions:

RQ1: What challenges did K-3 early childhood education leaders encounter when assisting teachers with transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2: What do early childhood education leaders think they need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future?

I presented excerpts from the data to support my analysis of codes, categories, and themes. The first theme was that early childhood education leaders encountered challenges and successes in providing resource and emotional support to teachers during online teaching. Participants expressed the frustrations, stress, and anxiety they experienced as school leaders during the transition to online teaching and learning. Participants explained that their teachers were close to each other and relied on one another for emotional support. Participants indicated that they provided the teachers with various resources that required teachers to engage in staff development and training. Google Classroom was a resource provided to help teachers prepare their lessons using their documents, cameras, and laptops. Participants expressed how they needed to often step in to help teachers alleviate the stress they experienced.

The second theme reported by early childhood education leaders was that they encountered challenges in communication with teachers during transition to and while they engaged in online teaching. Teachers, parents, and students needed to know what

plans and strategies were for transitioning to online teaching. For a smooth transition to online learning, meetings, and communications were scheduled using various media. Participants indicated that many communications were held using Zoom, emails, and telephones. Participants discussed that they had team meetings to discuss challenges, and shared suggestions and solutions that worked in their classrooms. Participants explained that some of these communications and meetings were meant for teachers to help other teachers. Communication between the participants and teachers created a team bond and showed that they could depend upon each other.

The third theme was that early childhood education leaders were challenged to help teachers keep students focused and bridge the educational gap caused by online teaching and learning. Participants shared their diverse experiences of difficulties such as the absence of adequate technology and the necessity of training teachers in utilizing the same. A sole male participant, P9, reported challenges working alongside teachers and attempting to control them rather than identifying teachers' issues and aiding in the resolution of teachers' challenges. Participants discussed that keeping students focused during online learning was a challenge because some students needed hands-on learning. Participants discussed the challenge of parent participation during online teaching and learning, because some parents did students' assignments instead of helping them with the assignments.

The fourth theme was that early childhood education leaders needed help providing resources and support for students and their parents when teaching and learning online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants reported that the parents did not

have the time or experience to assist their children with online learning. Many parents worked from home and could not provide support to their children during their work hours. Participants explained that they worked to provide resources that teachers delivered to families. Some participants discussed how some of their teachers drove to the homes of the students to provide Chromebooks and laptops for the families. Some families were offered tutoring options for their children.

The fifth theme was that early childhood education leaders proactively addressed the needs that arose during the pandemic. They gained experiences and developed strategies that may be used during future academic disruptions. While not expecting another pandemic or major disruption that would bring about the closing of schools, early childhood education leaders responded to their needs of provide leadership for all stakeholders during the pandemic. Some participants discussed that the need for training on the use of technology was important, as well as having the technology needed for online learning. Participants explained that socio-emotional support was essential during online learning. During this time, all the participants need some emotional support from each other. Participants feel there is a need for training, all stakeholders should be trained in their various capacities. Parents and students should be trained in how to access the programs and applications needed for online learning. Participants discussed that there should be flexibility during online learning. All stakeholders should be ready to make changes that fit the situations at hand. Preparing and planning for future pandemics or disturbances will make the transitions a little smoother for all stakeholders if needed in the future.

The first three themes addressed RQ1, and the last two themes addressed RQ2. RQ1 investigated the challenges K-3 early childhood education leaders encounter when assisting teachers with transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings from this study demonstrated that K-3 early childhood education leaders who participated in this quantitative study with interviews encountered many challenges ranging from not having sufficient technology and their teachers lacking the adequate training needed for transitioning to online learning. The participants recognized the teachers' stress and anxiety dealing with transitioning online and their problems. The participants also perceived that the teachers lacked the experience to keep the students focused and involved during online learning which helped create a gap in learning. The participants provided the adequate training teachers needed and supplied the teachers with the technology for conducting online learning. Professional counseling was provided to teachers who required it. RQ2 focused on what early childhood education leaders think they need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future. The participants disclosed that adequate training is needed for all stakeholders on transitioning to online learning and an ample number of technologies available for teachers and families.

More emotional support and empathy for teachers may limit their stress and anxiety and may improve their teaching performance. Collaboration and input from parents, education leaders, teachers, and members of the community are needed for successfully transitioning to online teaching and learning. Chapter 5 contains a discussion on how study results address the research problem and the gap in the literature on early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to

online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The next chapter will also include the theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and conclusion of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with the transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and what education leaders need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future. For this basic qualitative study, I conducted open-ended, semi-structured interviews on Zoom with nine early childhood education leaders. The following themes were derived from the data analysis: Theme 1: Early childhood education leaders encountered challenges and successes in providing resource and emotional support to teachers during online teaching. Early childhood education leaders perceived that teachers need emotional support and resources from early childhood education leaders to teach online. Theme 2: Early childhood education leaders perceived addressing challenges in communication with all stakeholders is essential during and following the transition to online teaching. Theme 3: Early childhood education leaders were challenged to keep students focused and bridge the educational gap caused by online learning. Theme 4: Early childhood education leaders need help providing resources and supporting students and parents when teaching and learning are online. Theme 5: Early childhood education leaders have strategies to use during future academic disruptions.

In Chapter 5, I explain the findings of the study and provide insight into early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I used the qualitative approach to

acquire clarity on early childhood education leaders' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic when assisting K-3 teachers with teaching online, and they had to make a rapid transition to online learning. The research findings are compared with the current literature and the conceptual framework of experiential learning theory. I incorporated the study implications, limitations, and recommendations in the conclusion of Chapter 5.

Interpretation of the Findings

I asked nine early childhood education leaders about their experiences and challenges encountered when assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic and what they believed they needed to assist K-3 with teaching online in the future. Five themes emerged after the data analyses process was completed. The findings suggested that the lack of adequate technology and limited training in technology for the teachers, were factors for the challenges of transitioning to online learning. The findings revealed that the participants believed that necessary communication with all stakeholders and emotional support for teachers is vital when transitioning to online learning. Additionally, the lack of technology and networks needed by families for online learning affects the learning process. Most families were eventually provided with the necessary technology and training. Finally, providing activities and strategies to keep the students focused to partake online was essential.

I used semi-structured interviews to collect data from nine participants. I asked the participants about their challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. I conducted the data analysis using Braun and Clark's (2006) six-phase framework. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning

theory provided the framework to analyze the phenomenon of how early childhood educators used different views of the learning process to address their challenges in transitioning to online and hybrid teaching.

The experiential learning theory explained that there are different views and stages in learning, rather than the traditional one. Kolb's experiential learning theory includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, which were reflected in the strategies used by the participants in the transition to online learning (1984). Kolb's experiential learning theory model emphasized the importance of learner participation in all educational activities and addressed the concept that experience enhanced learning. Akella (2010) explained one of the purposes of Kolb's experiential theory was to identify individual preferences or distinct learning experiences and to adjust teaching techniques to different styles of learning. My study reflects Kolb's experiential learning theory that identified different ways teaching and learning opportunities were implemented by education leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theme 1: Early Childhood Education Leaders Encounter Challenges and Successes in Providing Resource and Emotional Support to Teachers during Online Teaching.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers were required to transition to online learning abruptly without ample notice. Brown et al. (2021) stated that while unprecedented times have presented education systems with unique challenges and unexpected stresses at the macro-level of decision-making, many education leaders expressed frustration at the lack of distributed and strategic leadership from certain

constitutional agencies. The teachers had limited training and inadequate technology for transitioning to online learning. Pollock (2020) indicated that most U.S. school systems switched abruptly to virtual or distance education in the Spring of 2020 without providing educators or school leaders with adequate preparation, leading to many questions regarding the leadership and support of learning in a digital/virtual/online classroom environment. König et al. (2020) argued that teachers faced significant challenges in adapting to online teaching, communicating, and assisting students with their educational and developmental needs.

Providing Emotional Support to Teachers

König et al. (2020) indicated that the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic presented educators and students with an entirely new set of circumstances in which the continuation of teaching and learning was only possible through alternative means of education, and teachers were required to use various online resources and tools to solve problems and adopt new methods for teaching and learning. Bergdahl and Nouri (2021) found that based on the views and opinions of many teachers, distance education in a crisis rendered unique teaching and learning landscape with distinctive requirements, which was often quite different from the classroom setting. Considering the ongoing pandemic, Netolicky (2020) indicated that education leaders had recognized the need to address the emotional well-being of teachers and students who were feeling apprehensive and worried about the future of schooling. Some participants agreed that they needed to provide emotional support and resources for the teachers. P1 indicated that there was a lot of crying and a lot of tears from the teachers. P4 “I believe the teachers are more

stressed.” According to Asio and Bayucca (2021), education leaders had varying levels of digital competence, and their limited skillset and knowledge added to their difficulties in understanding the needs of their teachers and providing appropriate support and strategic direction. Ferdig et al. (2020) stated in their study that with the rise in online learning after the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers were more likely to focus on efficacy, thereby desensitizing the learning process. The participants needed to provide support and empathy for their teachers. P9 indicated:

It was rough, and it was like people were suffering, you know. So I would say, yeah, I think the humanity of being able to empathize with a teacher. you know, in person, emotional support. Yeah, emotional support. I used to start my meetings like, Hey, how are you doing? And the teachers would always say, You know, I'm doing okay. But you can tell, like, something's not, you know. Something's not right.

Some of the participants had not experienced this level of disruption and they depended on each other for emotional support. Unfortunately, many participants did not share that they provided their teachers with the emotional support they needed, even though the teachers were provided the resources needed for transitioning to online learning.

König et al. (2020) indicated that the COVID-19 situation required not only knowledge and skills but also confidence regarded success in online teaching, and regarding the affective-motivational area, they focused on teachers' self-efficacy, one of the most important constructs in teacher competence. It was agreed by Iivari et al. that

some teachers displayed resilience, creativity, and perseverance during the pandemic of COVID-19, whereas others failed to do so. P1 stated, “They were frustrated because they didn’t have the time throughout the day to spend with each student, one-on-one every single day.” Constantia et al. (2021) found that the more a school leader inspired teachers with their emotional intelligence, the more effectively they were able to accomplish their educational objectives. Borup et al. (2020) found that coaches were helpful during this time of uncertainty and stress and coaching not only allowed for personalized professional development but also honored teachers' professionalism by permitting them to identify and address their unique needs. P3 said, “I would love more professional development time with the teacher to help them feel confident in what they’re doing to help students.” Netolicky (2020) indicated that education leaders had recognized the need to address the emotional well-being of teachers who were feeling apprehensive and worried about the future of schooling. Participant P3 also added, “Some of these feelings came from teachers were dealing with their personal family issues with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as being the support for the students and parents.”

The results confirm the research findings by Alhat (2020), who disclosed that one significant challenge that most levels of education faced was the rapid shift to online education, a factor that made online learning a challenge for the participants. P1 stated, “Our counselors led social-emotional activities where the teachers would still do scavenger hunts to find certain things in a house. We would have virtual dance parties. So, we work that into every day look different than the face to face day.” Ogodo (2021) used Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory to investigate teachers' perceptions of their

self-efficacy regarding their technical knowledge and competencies in the transition to virtual education. He concluded that teachers' perception of themselves during the transition to the online teaching setting was crucial to their teaching abilities and learning outcomes.

Technology and Resources for Teachers

Based on Asio and Bayucca's (2021) findings, schools with limited technology were not prepared to implement online education, and virtual education could be successful in schools with adequate technology and support services. Nisiforou and Vrasidas (2021) also reported that teachers were not prepared for the switch to online learning during the recent influenza pandemic and that inadequate access to technology and digital skills caused difficulties for this group of teachers. P6 shared:

Oh, I wanted to you asked about the support that we needed. We did not have the technology that we needed to teach successfully, on the computer. I spent a lot of my own money on cameras, and things that I needed to teach virtually.

Bagwell, (2020) and Lopez and Hossain (2021) agreed that educators found themselves challenged to respond to unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic in creative ways to meet the ongoing educational needs for virtual and in-person education.

The participants disclosed that the lack of technology and resources for online learning impeded the transition to online learning. The participants recognized that it was a challenge assisting teachers because there was a shortage of technology available for all the students to use at school and at home. According to Morgan (2020), education leaders looked for opportunities that advanced teaching and learning, and they advocated equal

access to technology to ensure the needs of all students are met. They also served as models for their colleagues, identifying and exploring new technologies to support learning. P3 stated: “I would love more professional development time with the teachers to help them feel confident in what they're doing to help students.”

Technology Training for Teachers.

Barnes et al. (2018) reported that prior research also indicated that early childhood teachers needed training that was relevant to their day-to-day tasks and teaching environments. P5: "We're going to have to implement training to make sure everybody's getting equitable education." Constantia et al., (2021) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the mobilization of emotional intelligence by education leaders had disappeared due to the lack of direct interpersonal interaction during the lockdown.

Nasr (2020) stated that the uncertainty of how to deliver online to diverse learners became a challenge to virtually all education leaders and teachers when they had to transition from in-person pedagogical practices to ones that resorted to technological proficiency, creative assessment methods, and underutilized pedagogies. Rashid et al. (2021) explained that the technical difficulties that arose during online teaching were hard to resolve because teachers were unfamiliar with the electronic platform used to conduct online instruction. The participants regarded themselves as incapable when assisting teachers with online learning, especially their lack of knowledge about transitioning to online learning and that they had no planning time.

Morgan (2020) indicated that at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers were instructed to report to work so they could receive training on remote

instruction, but schools were closed for students. The participants needed to provide professional development training to their teachers on transitioning to online teaching. The participants mentioned various strategies like communications and professional development used when assisting teachers with transitioning to online teaching. Bellibas and Liu (2017) indicated that teachers are more likely to generate greater effective perceptions when they gain more information and practice through training programs.

Theme 2: Early Childhood Education Leaders Perceive Addressing Challenges in Communication with all Stakeholders is Essential During and Following the Transition to Online Teaching

Most participants shared their experiences and used when communicating with teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Connolly et al. (2019) pointed out that the preparation for online learning should not only include identifying the content that will be covered, but also considering how you will support the various forms of interaction that are integral to the learning process. Brock et al (2021). indicated that as instruction moved from face-to-face learning to an online class, instructional leaders had to find ways of communicating with teachers. Communication is essential in every aspect of relying on messages and instructions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were no in-person meetings or face-to-face contacts. Bagwell (2020) indicated that to move forward with their educational missions, school education leaders must learn how to navigate challenges and rely upon their colleagues to implement different approaches than they have previously used. Pollock (2020) observed, education leaders were required to not only draw on their existing skills and knowledge to meet the challenges of educating

students during the beginning of the pandemic but also to develop new skills and knowledge of their current responsibilities. Participants had to create various means of communication to share information and conduct meetings, and activities, and just for staff to reach out to each other. Beauchamp et al. (2021), education leaders in their study spoke persuasively about their ability to develop practical, versatile, and personally reassuring methods of communicating with parents, faculty, pupils, and a range of external agencies, all of which were confronted with exceptional circumstances with varying degrees of resilience. P1 reflected “There was communication in writing explaining what steps needed to get started with virtual school.” By creating opportunities for social connections through virtual platforms, Bagwell suggested that school leaders could build resilience as individuals engaged in collective sense-making about what happened while building their capacity to cope during crises. In a remote classroom, Barnett et al. indicated that it was important to understand and then respond to the needs of teachers while maintaining ongoing communication to establish a climate of mutual support (2021). P3 stated: “We would get online and just have conversations so teachers can help each other.”

P5 shared “As we prepared, we tried to have as many clear communications as possible”. There were phone calls, and team meetings with how to do things.” There were many communications and meetings held by the leadership team and various forms of media were used. P5 also said:

People didn't want to meet in person understandably. And so, there were a lot of video meetings and phone calls and I tried to specify my communications and

emails and shared documents a lot so that people could refer back to things as we were generating procedures to go forward.

Brock et al. (2021) indicated that as instruction moved from face-to-face learning to an online classroom, instructional leaders had to find ways of communicating with teachers. P7 explained:

We had an initial meeting to see exactly what we would do. And then everybody was always given an agenda of what to discuss. So, we already knew what would be discussed. Everybody comes to the table with their ideas and things like that, every and always at the end. There's always the questions and things like that across the board.

P8 said, "As administrators, we would send out a system in our district called Blackboard Connect, which sends out phone messages and also sends them as email messages or text messages." Fernandez and Shaw (2020) identified three of the education leaders' best practices for dealing with unforeseeable challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic: (a) Utilized leadership that emphasized empowerment, involvement, and collaboration, (b) Distribute leadership responsibilities to a network of teams to improve the quality of decision-making during crises, (c) Communicate clearly and frequently with all stakeholders through a variety of communication channels. P8 shared, "We had a ton of Zoom Meetings as administrators with the district. We were on almost every day." P6 stated, "We would meet and have team meetings online to discuss the challenges and share some suggestions that may work in our classrooms with each other."

Stefan and Nazarov (2020) suggested that education leaders need to be flexible, account for the feelings of others, engage them, and be attentive to their perspectives. Liu (2017) also agreed that when education leaders facilitated teacher cooperation for the development of new teaching practices and fostered the belief that teachers were accountable for improving their teaching skills and feeling responsible for their student's success, then teachers became more self-confident in their ability to implement multiple and effective instructional strategies. P7 stated:

And then everybody was always given an agenda of what to discuss. So, we already knew what to discuss. Everybody comes to the table with their ideas and things like that, every and always at the end. There's always the questions and things like that.

Theme 3: Early Childhood Education Leaders were Challenged to Keep Students Focused and Bridge the Educational Gap Caused by Online Learning

This theme emerged from participants' challenges to transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and explained the circumstances of adapting to sudden disruptions. Most of the educational leaders admitted that were fearful because they had not experienced disruptions and had to abruptly transition to different ways of learning. The result of this study confirms Jelinska and Paradowski's (2021) findings that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the most affected groups were education leaders. Cardullo et al. (2021) concurred and added that other challenges were the lack of Internet connection, the lack of interaction and communication, and the lack of motivation and student engagement. Whalen (2020) found that participants felt overwhelmed and unprepared to

take advantage of online or remote teaching strategies and tools, and they struggled to adapt their pedagogy to fluctuating conditions, such as students' unreliable Internet access, changing personal requirements, and unclear or shifting educational or governmental directives.

Keeping Students Focused

Iivari et al. (2020) acknowledged that children had been immersed in digital technology since birth, but that these children were not equally prepared for their technology-rich futures and that a variety of digital divides continued to exist in society, which affected the young generation as well as their digital identities. Ma et al. (2021) explained that some challenges were related to the separation between the teachers and their students in comparison to conventional classroom instruction and the lack of experience with online instruction.

The participants found it was a challenge to keep the students focused and attentive to participate in what was being taught. P2 said,

“I believe teachers didn’t have much control over the students, because putting a kindergartner and a first grader on a computer was a struggle to keep the students focused.”

Conducting online learning created a gap in learning because some students needed the physical presence of the teachers. Constantia et al. (2021) stated that human interaction was increasingly dependent on technology, but unfortunately, both teachers and education leaders were lacking in the technical skills required to deal with the distance education generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. P3 shared:

We made sure that there was an instructional assistant that was working with that child, So, there was less time off online, because if a parent had to sit by the child, and a kindergartener can't sit at a computer screen for 6 hours. The participants recalled that it was a challenge to keep the students focused and engaged online from their homes. So that was hard for them.

P8 said, “And then the kids had their time that they did the independent work and whatnot. The teachers were very challenged with the fact that kids didn't follow through at home.”

Gap In Learning

The participants saw a gap in learning with the younger children because they needed hands-on learning and face-to-face learning to understand what they were being taught. Kaden (2020) stated that teachers needed to develop creative ways to engage pupils and move to more effective instructional strategies and that they were required to provide meaningful educational experiences to all students, whether distance learning, online learning, or virtual learning. P5 indicated:

It was challenging, especially when you got the littles, who you're trying to teach them to read. They don't know how to read. Yeah, how are they going to do a lesson online? So yeah, it was a lot of how we do this and recreating.

P4 said, “So, we had to go through the parents, we had to get permission from the parents to be able to work with the kids online if the parents so chose.”

Theme 3 reflected that education leaders struggled keeping the students focused and limiting the learning gap for students learning online during the COVID-19 pandemic

when they had to abruptly transition to online learning. P4 explained “If the parent did not have a device or Internet, we set up schedules where kids were able to join the classes at the set times, and we had office hours for parents and kids. P8 shared:

So the challenge was trying to get kids on the devices and getting parents off the devices because they wanted to be in the class with their children. The kids did not have dedicated study places like we had suggested.

The participants’ responses suggested that the various challenges with transitioning online, which included limited knowledge of technology and the lack of technology hindered the transitioning process of keeping the students focused during online learning. P9 shared, “The students in the classroom, in person, needed a lot of assistance, and it took you away from the camera, which then left those students online unsupervised, and they weren't getting the help that they needed.”

Based on the study findings, inadequate training in technology and lack of technology are factors that are needed for adequate transitioning to online learning. Kim (2020) stated that, while young children may not have the technical skills necessary to perform online learning tasks, such as typing responses into a chat screen or sharing files with written information, the various functions and tools of video communication platforms could have been helpful to children's learning when teachers utilized them appropriately. P5 shared:

We too have students that go to daycare all day long, and then when their parents get home from work, they have no time to sit down and help them with the lessons that you know they should have been doing during the day.

Theme 4: Early Childhood Education Leaders Need Help Providing Resources and Supporting Students and Parents when Teaching and Learning are Online

Patrick et al. (2020) found that families with children faced numerous stresses due to the loss of economic and psychological support. Daniel (2020) stated that as schools improved their capacities to inform, reassure, and maintain contact with students and parents, they also needed to develop their capabilities to teach remotely, giving priority to reassuring students rather than attempting to learn new pedagogy or technology immediately. P4 said:

So, what we did was we had our teachers reach out to other families via class dojo or by calling to let them know that their classes will be online and how to log in.

The plan to combat the spread of the virus involved lending computers to students without them at home and providing internet access to children without their personal computers. We organized the drive-through service at a local church in the community, and we would be there at certain times, and we sent out like blast where families could come to drive by and we would wave, and they could pick up different things like diapers, toilet paper, anything they needed. For their children and their homes, and we made that a few times a week.

König et al. (2020) argued that teachers faced significant challenges in adapting to online teaching, communicating, and assisting students with their educational and developmental needs.

P4 indicated that able parents come to a specific location to pick up a Chromebook or a hotspot for our students to learn online. P8 added “All of our parents

came through the carpool line we checked out devices. We checked out the work packets. We took care of all of that within a matter of 4 days.” According to Morgan (2020), education leaders looked for opportunities that advanced teaching and learning, and they advocated equal access to technology to ensure the needs of all students are met. P3 stated that the parents could call in or fill out an online form or if they needed additional Wi-Fi, my secretary could enter that into the student system child. P2: “Just because there was no accessibility, we issued laptops and Chrome books to families who did not have them.” P5 indicated that they put together materials for families like books, worksheets, and other items that the students could be doing without being online or on the computer.

The plan to combat the spread of the virus involved lending computers to students without them at home and providing internet access to children without their personal computers. The participants provided tutoring services for children who had difficulties with learning to read. P3 explained, “If the first-grade teacher said a student was struggling with reading, then we made sure that there was an instructional assistant that may be working with that child.” Kim (2020) found that teachers who participated in online teaching experiences were given opportunities to interact with children and reflect on how to best promote young children's development and learning online. P2 explained that some families were offered tutoring options for their children. P4 said :

So, what we did was we had our teachers reach out to other families via class dojo or by calling to let them know that their classes will be online and how to log in. We would sit and talk to families all day, on how to transition to online learning.

Theme 5: Early Childhood Education Leaders have Strategies to Use During Future Academic Disruptions

According to Bagwell, the COVID-19 pandemic offered education leaders the opportunity to reevaluate how technology integration could be implemented equitably through distance learning while simultaneously addressing the conflict between well-being and the demands of teaching. Kaden (2020) studied the effects of school closures on the professional lives of teachers in the United States and found that an increase and change in the workload of teachers and the use of online education can support learning for many students, but it must be carefully designed and tailored to meet individual student needs to avoid furthering social and economic inequality. P3 indicated building more collaboration and collegiality among our teams because all members of society will have to be involved during another outbreak of COVID. According to P5: “I would love to see some type of state program or regulated standard for online learning that could be a little more equitable throughout the state.”

Ogodo et al. (2021), stated that a structured approach to teaching and learning was essential for online learning, virtual learning, computer-based learning, and web-based learning. P1 indicated, “In case we end up going into something like this again, they feel like they have the technology training to be able to support this and support virtual and online teaching.” Kaden (2020) agreed that as schools reopened, teachers and education leaders needed to integrate technology and online teaching into their curricula. Barnes et al. (2018) indicated that providing professional development opportunities for early

childhood teachers could contribute to improving the quality of care and therefore improve the health and well-being of children. P5 indicated:

I think we need a lot, not just the teachers. I think everybody needs to train parents on what online learning looks like. We need to train our students on, what does online look learning looks like. We need to train our teachers on how to make lessons online and how to reach out to our students.

Bergdahl and Nouri (2021) agreed that while some schools were unprepared for the transition into temporary distance education, i.e., less blended forms of instructional delivery, during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, experiences gained and lessons learned could be collectively evaluated and used to develop pedagogical plans, for use now and moving forward. Rabaglietti et al. (2021) recommended considering the current COVID-19 pandemic and possible future crises. It should be a priority to strengthen cross-sectoral skills such as self-efficacy that will reduce stress. Thus, research indicated that education leaders should provide teachers with training programs that will support their self-efficacy. Bergdahl and Nouri added that a future school preparedness plan should include a selection of digital tools that readily work for distance learning and should be considered by educational technology developers. Brock et al. stated that primarily working with children in schools would always be the cornerstone of teacher education, yet it was a foundation that must now be expanded. Bagwell (2020) indicated that researchers should investigate how school leaders navigate through distress and uncertainty during this pandemic to support their faculty in embracing the need for change. Bagwell also reported that it was necessary to conduct more research to

understand the technology-capacity-building support and the skills that teachers need to adjust to learning different pedagogical practices for online teaching. Bloom et al. (2020) stated that institutions and teachers will continue to search for flexible approaches to remedy the damage caused by COVID-19's interruptions to students' learning paths. P2 commented that "Flexibility? I think that's an amazing one, how to be flexible with technology can be frustrating for some people so, be flexible and knowing that is going to take some time to know it." According to Morgan (2020), as schools and teachers become more familiar with online education during this difficult period, they will likely learn valuable lessons that will assist them in managing future school closings. As stated by Răducu and Stănculescu (2021), the quality of early education had a profound impact on the development of the child's personality, attitudes, and values, which were later internalized and respected in adulthood. P4 indicated, "that the biggest thing is to know and understand that the students that we serve before Covid are not the same students after Covid, and we have to adjust to their level." Zhao (2020) stated that because the damages associated with COVID-19 were incurable, there was the opportunity to rethink education, and the rethinking should not have focused on improving schooling but pay attention to what, how, and where to learn.

Limitations of the Study

There were some potential limitations to this basic qualitative study conducted in an online Zoom setting. I recognized that there was potential for my personal bias. I received approval for the Walden University IRB to conduct an audio Zoom interviews to address early childhood education leaders' challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with

transitioning to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This method of interviewing participants allowed me the ability to provide participants with a safe meeting choice. Initial correspondence with the potential participants involved an introduction to the nature and purpose of the study as well as a screening for participation eligibility. The eligibility criteria were that participants be early childhood education leaders who held leadership positions during the academic school years from 2020 until 2022. These education leaders were responsible for assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The limitations of the study included the small sample size, population, location, gender, and qualified profession of the participants, and researcher bias. The study was limited to nine early childhood education leaders who had the position during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022; generalizing findings from this study is limited. Confining the study to only nine participants limited to a maximum of nine schools sealed the limitation on the study. The participants in this study's experiences were typical of other early childhood education leaders and, therefore, could represent the population of other early childhood education leaders. I validated the limitation of the small sample size by ensuring that the data from the participants were strong enough to develop relevant descriptions and data saturation.

The bias of the researcher could be a possible limitation of the study. Even though I was professional, I was not exempt from being biased during the interview process. To prevent being biased, I recorded the narrative reflection in my journal and conducted the basic qualitative study objectively, but there was still the possibility of bias. According to

Rubin and Rubin (2012), researchers accept that interpretations they make are not possible, nor necessary for the researcher to eliminate all biases or expectations. Rubin and Rubin went on to indicate that researchers cannot eradicate their own experiences and expectations and that researchers should be cautious not to levy their expectations on interviewees and remain aware that their expectations may affect what they see and hear.

The bias of the interviewer was a potential challenge that may have influenced the findings of the study. To avoid bias and provide credibility to my findings, I used the interview protocol and a reflective journal. To prevent bias, I used the snowball sampling method and avoided interviewing participants I was acquainted with. As the sole researcher and the major influencer in the basic qualitative research process, it was essential to keep my role as the researcher and the credibility of my study.

Recommendations

Based on the participants' perspectives regarding early childhood education leader challenges assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online learning, I suggest further research to find answers that address the specific emotional support that was provided to teachers experiencing stress and anxiety during their experience with teaching online. Providing the proper emotional support and empathy for teachers may build their resilience and perform better when teaching online.

The success of online learning for younger children is based on activities that they can actively be involved in. I suggest programs be created that would present the feeling that the students are in the presence of the teacher and other students when learning

online. The students may feel the need to be actively involved, which may improve their learning.

To gain a better understanding of the challenges and impact of online learning in early childhood ages there should be further study on how educational leaders addressed the emotional stress teachers encountered when transitioning to online learning. More information is also needed on the teachers' challenges as they transitioned to online learning. This study was focused on early childhood education leaders in the United States, because the pandemic affected most countries, I suggest research that included the differences and similarities schools in other countries experiences with transitioning to online learning.

Implications

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), academic leaders are interested in how the findings confront or modify the literature and are particularly concerned about the theoretical implications. They want to see the details about the methods used to judge the credibility of the findings. My purpose for conducting this basic qualitative study was to explore early childhood education leaders' experiences assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic from the years 2020 through 2022. For this study, I used Kolb's (1989) experiential learning theory as the framework. The participants agreed that the abrupt transition to online learning was challenging for all stakeholders. The participants in this study acknowledged that there was a lack of adequate training and insufficient technological resources for transitioning

to online learning. The results from this study may provide strategies for preparing teachers when transitioning to online learning during a disruption in the education arena.

The results of this study provided information for all stakeholders which included early childhood education leaders, teachers, parents, and students. Early childhood education leaders can use the study to provide better assistance to teachers when transitioning to online learning. The study provides strategies and resources early childhood education leaders may need in case of future disruptions that may lead to transitioning to online learning. The results of the study provide information regarding how to address the teachers' stress and anxiety when teaching students online. The study provides information regarding what resources and training parents need to work with their children at home.

Based on the study's findings, early childhood education leaders can increase various forms of communication tools when reaching out to teachers, parents, and students to provide information and instructions. Teachers could use the outcome of the study to engage the students and make them more focused and active when learning online. The participants in the study provided activities and resources to keep the students involved and focused during online learning. The study may provide positive social change when the education leaders use the information provided in the study regarding preparing teachers, providing the teachers with emotional support, setting up professional development, and the including technology resources teachers need for transitioning to online learning.

Conclusion

Early childhood education leaders' experiences regarding their challenges in assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and what education leaders need to assist K-3 teachers with teaching online in the future were the focus of my study. Reflecting on the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how schools had to transition to online learning without warning abruptly, this study provides information on the challenges early childhood educators encountered when assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online learning. According to Stefan and Nazarov (2020), in their study to evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the challenges and opportunities for education leaders, found that education leaders could take advantage of current strategic opportunities and impose new organizational responsibilities based on innovative use of new digital technology channels to continuously adapt to changing circumstances. Metcalfe and Perez (2020) suggested that school leaders should focus on professional development for all teachers to build capacity in a virtual learning environment; and continue building networks, sharing best practices related to what is working in their schools, and collaborating with other instructional leaders to determine how they are tackling the challenges. It is imperative to explore early childhood education leaders' understanding of teachers' self-efficacy concerning their preparedness as to what is needed to teach students online. Early childhood educators' leaders are also expected to provide professional development and the technology teachers need for transitioning to online learning.

Regarding Theme 1, early childhood education leaders encounter challenges and successes in providing resource and emotional support to teachers during online teaching. Leaders reported teachers needed emotional support and resources from early childhood education leaders to teach online. The participants explained that teachers were not provided with the emotional support they needed when teaching students online. Few participants provided counseling services to their teachers. However, they were provided with the necessary resources and training for working with students online. For Theme 2, Early childhood education leaders perceive addressing challenges in communication with all stakeholders is essential during and following the transition to online teaching. Early childhood education leaders need to communicate with teachers to provide information about upcoming events, and activities, or just reach out to find out how the teachers are doing. The leaders used different methods of communication tools to reach out to the teachers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, most teachers and education leaders were confined to their homes and had to communicate by telephone, email, Zoom, and Schoology, rather than face-to-face. Theme 3 is aimed at the challenges education leaders encounter to keep students focused during online learning and the educational gap that affects students during online learning. The participants explained that during online learning the students focused on various other things at home and did not focus on what was being taught to them. They indicated that the students had a limited attention span for learning online. The participants suggested providing activities to keep the students focused and engaged. The participants also identified that the students experienced a learning gap due to the limited resources for transitioning to online learning. Another

contribution to the learning gap was that the students needed to learn certain activities face-to-face. Kindergarten students need hands-on activities for successful learning. Theme 4 was on early childhood education leaders need to provide the resources and support to students for successful online learning. The participants explained that some families lacked the resources and support for transitioning to online learning. Some families were provided computers and internet services if needed or requested for online learning. Some families were provided torture services to assist with online learning. Participants indicated that they and some teachers provided learning activities outside the students' homes. Theme 5 was on the strategies early childhood education leaders provided for addressing transitioning to online learning in the future. Participants suggested ample technology resources and technology training for learning online. The participants suggested there should be flexibility when teaching students online. The participants indicated that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic will allow teachers to experience various ways of teaching online. The participants suggested providing counseling for teachers experiencing emotional stress.

The findings suggested that the lack of adequate technology and limited training in technology for the teachers, as well as the education leader participants, were challenges of transitioning to online learning. The findings revealed that early childhood leaders believed that necessary communication with all stakeholders and emotional support for teachers is vital when transitioning to online learning.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

1. When the COVID-19 pandemic caused schools to close, how did you inform and prepare your K-3 teachers for the transition to teaching online?
2. What assistance did you get from others, for example, the School Board, to assist teachers with the transition to online teaching?
3. What challenges did you experience during the first few months after transitioning K-3 teachers to online teaching?
4. How did you address these challenges at that time?
5. What, if anything, did K-3 teachers ask of you that you could not provide to them?
6. What challenges did you experience when assisting teachers in the second year of school closures concerning online teaching?
7. Moving forward, what suggestions do you have for other administrators who are assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching for other reasons, such as weather-related closures, health closures, etc.?
8. What additional training or resources do you have for other administrators needing to assist K-3 teachers with successfully transitioning to online teaching?

Prompts to encourage participants to expand on responses that may be limited:

1. Can you clarify.....?
2. What did you mean by.....?
3. You stated that.....

4. Tell me more.....
5. Why do you think.....?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol Guide

Interviewee: _____ Location: _____
Date: _____ Time: _____
School: _____ Grade Level: _____

There are research studies about the challenges administrators encountered assisting teachers transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Online teaching was not new in the school system, but it was not a regular way of learning in schools. Administrators were not prepared or ready for the abrupt change to online teaching which brought about major challenges for all the stake holders. Hope we do not experience another pandemic, administrators and schools must be prepared with the knowledge of how to successfully and smoothly assist their teachers to transition to online teaching. The findings of this study may provide early childhood administrators, schools, and teachers with the information and strategies to understand the process of transitioning to online teaching.

You have been chosen because I find you as a person who has valuable experiences to share about early childhood administrators' challenges in assisting teachers with transitioning to online teaching. I would like to assure you that your participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the interview at any time. You are also free to answer or skip any questions you feel uncomfortable answering. Your participation is highly important to this study, and I appreciate your participation.

Introduction and Background Information: Thank you for volunteering to share your experiences and perspectives on your challenges assisting teachers transition to online teaching. I hope you mind providing some background information to know more about you before we start.

A. Participant's Background

1. How long have you been an administrator?
2. Were you an administrator during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What was your previous experiences with online teaching?
4. Have you experienced emergency disruption in your school before the COVID-19 pandemic?
5. How long have you been an early childhood administrator?

B. Interview Questions:

1. When the COVID-19 pandemic caused schools to close, how did you inform and prepare your K-3 teachers for the transition to teaching online?
2. What assistance did you get from others, for example, the School Board, to assist teachers with the transition to online teaching?
3. What challenges did you experience during the first few months after transitioning K-3 teachers to online teaching?
4. How did you address these challenges at that time?
5. What, if anything, did K-3 teachers ask of you that you could not provide to them?

6. What challenges did you experience when assisting teachers in the second year of school closures concerning online teaching?
7. Moving forward, what suggestions do you have for other administrators who are assisting K-3 teachers with transitioning to online teaching for other reasons, such as weather-related closures, health closures, etc.?
8. What additional training or resources do you have for other administrators needing to assist K-3 teachers with successfully transitioning to online teaching?

Prompts to encourage participants to expand on responses that may be limited:

1. Can you clarify.....?
2. What did you mean by.....?
3. You stated that.....
4. Tell me more.....
5. Why do you think.....?