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Administrators' Literacy Beliefs and Leadership Behaviors as Reflected in Early Childhood Practice

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Maria Kostrzewa Cahill entitled "Administrators' Literacy Beliefs and Leadership Behaviors as Reflected in Early Childhood Practice." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

Anne McGill-Franzen, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Richard L. Allington, Gary J. Skolits, Sandra L. Twardosz

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Childhood Practice

A Dissertation Presented for
the Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Maria Kostrzewa Cahill
August 2009

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Gene Cahill. I am forever grateful for the love, support, encouragement, and assistance you provide to me every single day. This study and would not have been possible without you nor would the pursuit of my doctoral degree. This dissertation is also dedicated to Ellie, Olivia, Ansley, Will, Sophia, and Maggie. Thank you for forfeiting mommy time to allow me to conduct this study and write it up. I love all of you!

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Richard and Florence Kostrzewa who encouraged me from birth to be a life-long learner and allowed me to do so by watching my children for countless hours.

Abstract

Research supports the value of quality preschool programs in preparing children for future schooling, though experts in early care and education have not reached consensus on all contributing factors. Studies of educational leadership suggest that school leaders have an effect on student outcomes, yet few studies in the area of early childhood education have focused on the role of leaders. This study examined the literacy beliefs and the leadership behaviors of the instructional leaders of child care facilities and investigated whether these characteristics and/or behaviors were associated with prekindergarten teachers' instructional practices in the areas of language development, reading, and writing. Instructional leaders self-reported their beliefs through response to a survey that contained the Teacher Beliefs Questionnaire (Seefeldt, 2004) and items related to leadership behaviors. Teachers' classroom practice was evaluated using the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation PreK Tool (Smith, Brady, Anastasopoulos, 2008). Results suggest that instructional leaders' beliefs are most consistent with best practice in the areas of book reading and writing and most contradictory in decoding knowledge. Additionally, their beliefs in the area of oral language are also congruent with recent research, but they appear not to have a full understanding of the relationship between early vocabulary development and later reading ability. Finally, leaders' beliefs did not fully translate into teacher practice. These findings suggest a need for further research of leaders' relationship to literacy instruction in the early childhood setting. Further, the need for more robust professional development in the area of literacy for child care personnel is discussed as is the need for changes in policy concerning education and compensation for professionals in the field of early care and education.

Table of Contents

Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	v
Chapter 1 Introduction and General Information	1
Rationale for the Study	3
Statement of the Problem	7
Purpose of the Study	7
Research Goals	7
Assumptions	8
Delimitations	8
Limitations	8
Summary	9
Chapter 2 Literature Review	10
Theoretical Approaches	10
Transformational Leadership	10
Constructivist Leadership	12
Educational Leaders' Impact on Classroom Instruction	13
Administrators of Child Care Facilities	15
Child Care Directors and Instructional Leaders' Impact on Quality and Instruction	18
Emergent Literacy Theory	22
Language and Literacy Development	23
Preschool Environments that Promote Language and Literacy Development	27
Summary	32
Chapter 3 Materials and Methods	33
Population	33
Sampling Frame	34
Phase I	35
Sampling Procedures	35
Survey Instrument	36
Procedures	37
Phase II	39
Participants	39
Observation Instrument	40
Procedures	41
Data Collection	42
Variables	43
Facility characteristics	43
Personal characteristics	43
Leadership behaviors	43
Developmental literacy beliefs	43
Classroom practice	44
Data Analysis	44
Summary	44

Chapter 4 Results	46
What are the pedagogical beliefs in the areas of reading, writing and language development of instructional leaders of child care facilities?.....	46
Difference in Beliefs in Terms of Leaders' Characteristics	48
What are the instructional leadership behaviors of early childhood educational leaders?49	
Difference in Leadership Behaviors in Terms of Leaders' Characteristics	50
Do instructional leaders' developmental literacy beliefs affect the instructional practices of teachers of prekindergarten classes?	51
Quantitative Results	51
Qualitative Results	52
The Shepherd's Flock	52
Wonderful Kids.....	54
Children's Corner.....	56
Healthy Tots.....	60
Child Exploratorium	62
Clement County Head Start	66
Raymondsville Elementary Preschool	68
Findings.....	70
Books and Book Reading.....	70
Writing and Print.....	70
Oral Language and Vocabulary	70
Decoding Knowledge.....	71
Summary	71
Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions.....	72
The developmental literacy beliefs of instructional leaders of child care facilities.....	72
Book Reading.....	72
Writing.....	73
Oral Language and Vocabulary	74
Decoding Knowledge.....	76
What are the instructional leadership behaviors of early childhood educational leaders?78	
Differences in Beliefs and Leadership Behaviors in Terms of Leaders' Characteristics79	
Is there a relationship between instructional leaders' developmental literacy beliefs and the instructional practices of teachers of prekindergarten classes?	80
Implications.....	82
Professional Development	82
Policy	83
Minimum Standards.....	84
Compensation	85
Collaboration.....	85
Reconceptualization of Developmentally Appropriate Practice	86
Research.....	87
Limitations	88
List of References	90
Appendix A.....	115
Tables.....	116

Appendix B	140
Director Survey	140
Vita.....	148

Chapter 1

Introduction and General Information

In the United States programs aimed at caring for young children have been in existence, with fluctuations in popularity and use, for about two hundred years (McGill-Franzen, 1993). Large scale attention to quality of care, however, did not begin until the mid-1980s. Since that time, researchers have continued to examine quality through numerous studies focused on differing aspects of early care and education (Prochner, 1996). Programs considered to be of “high quality” prepare children for formal schooling and social settings often producing children with better school success and fewer deviant behaviors (Olson, 2005). Focus on quality has become more important now than ever before because of the vast numbers of children receiving care outside of the home. More than 63% of children below the age of five receive care from someone other than their parents (NACCRA, n.d.), and nearly 70% of children between the ages of three and five attend a child care center (Pianta, 2007).

More and more parents are relying on child care personnel to attend to the physical, social, behavioral, and cognitive needs of their children while they work. Over half of all married couples are members of dual-wage-earner households (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). Additionally, more than three-fourths of all single women heads-of-household hold a job outside of the home, and nearly sixty percent of mothers with children under the age of six earn a wage (United States Department of Labor, n.d.).

Additionally, many parents, regardless of work status, send their children to child care facilities to prepare them for formal schooling. More than two-thirds of all four-year-olds in the United States attend a center-based child care program (United States Department of Education, n.d.). Many of these children attend preschool to help them adjust to and get ready for the

behavioral and cognitive demands of kindergarten. Consequently, the number of children attending child care facilities has increased in recent years and will likely continue to do so.

With the large numbers of children in formal child care and education programs, standardization of practice in early child care has begun to take hold. Beginning in the 1990s, states started to move toward standards-based systems of education for K-12 classrooms (Resnick, 2006). With the passing of the No Child Left Behind act in 2001, all states were required to not only develop standards for all major content areas, but also to create assessment devices aligned with the standards (Resnick, 2006). The standards movement also pushed educators to define what children should know and be able to do before entering kindergarten (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). Hence, in addition to developing standards of learning for K-12 classrooms, many states also developed standards for the preschool year (Schickedanz, 2004), and some states even went so far as to develop standards to include infant and toddler learning (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004).

Established standards of learning for preschool have resulted in focused expectations for student outcomes and learning in the early years. First, accepted standards of learning imply that young children are not only capable of learning in their early years, but that child care programs should be held accountable for teaching children during the time they spend in these settings (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2007). Additionally, research in the fields of neuroscience and child development suggests that much learning and structural development take place in the brain in the first years of life. Early experiences and interactions can have profound effects on both physical and cognitive development. Consequently, experiences, opportunities, interactions, and nutrition in the early childhood years are paramount for future success as they lay a foundation for all subsequent learning (Zero to Three, 2000).

In addition to a push for general learning in the pre-kindergarten years, there has been a heightened focus on early literacy learning over the past decade. Research indicates that literacy learning in the early years plays a tremendous role in an individual's total academic trajectory (Scarborough, 2001; Juel, 1988). Children with ample opportunities and experiences with print and language during the early years are in better positions upon entering kindergarten than their peers who lack such experience (Adams, 1990).

The attention on early literacy has been prominent across educational discussion and funding. In the United States the federal government has addressed the importance of early literacy with Early Reading First (U. S. Dept. of Education, n.d.), a large-scale competitive grant program designed to enhance the language and literacy environments of prekindergarten classrooms. The International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children jointly created a position statement (Neuman, Copple, & Bedekamp, 2000) to guide teachers and caregivers in delivering developmentally appropriate literacy practices to young children. Even educational television has placed a greater emphasis on literacy learning (Kirkorian & Anderson, 2008).

Despite this recent focus on literacy development in early childhood, the National Early Literacy Panel (2008) noted the deficit of studies in preschool literacy instruction as a limitation in drawing conclusions about best practice. Naturally, however, teachers and child care providers are able to influence children's exposure to books, print, and language.

Rationale for the Study

Research supports the value of quality preschool programs in preparing children for future schooling (Ramey & Ramey, 2004), though experts in early care and education have not

reached consensus on all contributing factors. A recent meta-analysis of preschool research (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008) further confirmed the contribution of preschool.

Preschool and kindergarten programs do affect young children's development of conventional literacy skills as well as important emergent literacy skills... The largest impact of the preschool and kindergarten programs was on the composite measure of readiness, indicating that they were highly effective in preparing children for school entry. (p. 199)

Common sense, as well as educational research suggests that teacher quality impacts student learning (Barnett, 2003; Burchinal et al., 2000; Helburn, et. al., 1995; Dunn, 1993; Early et al., 2006; NICHD Early Childcare Research Network, 2002, 2003; Pianta, 2007; Wishard, Shivers, Howes, & Ritchie, 2003). Higher quality child care programs are related to increases in cognitive development (Bryant, Burchinal, Lau, & Spraling, 1994; Burchinal et al., 2000; Helburn, et. al, 1995; Howes & Smith, 1995; NICHD, 2002), language development, and communication skills (Burchinal, et al., 2000; McCartney & Scarr, 1984), and children's relationships with early childhood teachers impact later academic achievement (Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Pianta & Howes, 2002). Additionally, several studies have also found a relationship between child caregivers' education level and their quality of care for children (Berk, 1985; Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002; McMullen & Alat, 2002; Phillips et al., 2000; Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997;). Even caregivers themselves acknowledge the importance of formal education (Manlove, 2001). Further, caregivers with a degree in early childhood education have been shown to provide the highest quality of care (Arnett, 1989).

While teachers certainly have the greatest impact on student outcomes, other adults in child care facilities, specifically directors, can also exert influence. Studies of educational

leadership suggest that school leaders have an effect on student outcomes. The instructional leaders' practices do not seem to have a direct effect on students' achievement and behavior as indicated by numerous studies (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Rather, the leader's style and the emphasis that the leader puts on instruction appear to influence the climate of the school and organizational patterns within the school. The school climate, in turn, seems to impact student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, 2000; Marks and Printy, 2003; Geijsel, Slegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003; Barker, 2001). Another finding that can be gathered from a review of educational leadership studies is that elementary principals seem to have a greater impact on student outcomes than secondary principals (Kaplan, Owings & Nunnery, 2005; Hallinger, 2003).

There are several points to consider in applying the findings from these studies to a preschool setting. The role of the principal has greater impact at the elementary school level than at higher levels of education perhaps because elementary schools are smaller, thereby, allowing principals to have a greater influence on teachers (Hallinger, 2003). If size is a factor on a leader's influence, it seems that the instructional leaders of preschools should have an even greater impact on classroom instruction and student outcomes than principals of grades schools or high schools because preschools and child care facilities are typically much smaller. Additionally, instructional leaders of childcare facilities often have a more direct relationship with students than principals: typically all adults in child care know all or at least most of the enrolled children on a first name basis, instructional leaders in child care settings are often called upon to step into the role of teacher when a substitute can not be found, and instructional leaders in many child care facilities play a role in ongoing programming such as a monthly school-wide story time.

More importantly, many instructional leaders in the early childhood setting have a much greater ability to affect school climate than principals of K-12 schools. Many of a principal's decisions, particularly in terms of hiring practices and curriculum implementation, are dictated by policies at the state and school district levels. Instructional leaders in many child care facilities, on the other hand, have much more leverage in terms of hiring decisions, professional development offerings, and resource allocation than principals of traditional schools. Consequently, the influence of instructional leaders on the classroom practices in the early childhood setting is potentially much more robust than the influence of principals on such outcomes.

Although leadership in early childhood follows many of the same principles as leadership in other fields, the early childhood setting varies greatly from typical organizations, even that of traditional education; thus, early childhood leaders must possess skills and abilities beyond those of leaders of non-school organizations and even traditional educational organizations (Rodd, 1994). Additionally, Rodd (1994) cautions that there are issues that must be considered when applying leadership principles to the child care setting. First, most leadership studies conducted outside of the field of education are based on men in leadership positions working with a primarily male workforce. The early childhood education workforce, however, is primarily female (Saluja, Early, & Clifford, 2002). Second, most educational leadership studies involve a principal who is overseeing a primarily middle class group of educated teachers. Instructional leaders of early childhood facilities, on the other hand, often supervise a staff that differs widely in age, education, training, experience, and social standing. Finally, in the early childhood setting, the instructional leaders themselves, because of less rigid state regulations (Tennessee

Department of Human Services, 2006), differ greatly in terms of age, education, training, and experience from typical public school principals.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the potential influence that instructional leaders of child care facilities may possess, few studies in the area of early childhood education have focused on the role of leaders. The few studies that have looked at the role of the instructional leader (Rous, 2004; Bella & Jorde Bloom, 2003; Howes, James, & Ritchie, 2003; Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992) suggest that they do indeed have a real impact on classroom instruction. However, no studies have examined the influence of directors of child care facilities or instructional leaders of preschools on classroom literacy instruction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the developmental literacy knowledge of instructional leaders of child care facilities. This study examined the literacy beliefs and the leadership behaviors of the instructional leaders of child care facilities and investigated whether these characteristics and/or behaviors were related to prekindergarten teachers' instructional practices in the areas of language development, reading, and writing.

Research Goals

The primary goals of the study were 1) to determine the pedagogical beliefs in the areas of reading, writing, and language development of instructional leaders of child care facilities and preschools; 2) to determine the instructional leadership behaviors of the leaders of child care facilities and preschools; and 3) to identify any relationships between the instructional leaders' education, experience, and/or pedagogical beliefs and knowledge in the area of literacy and the instructional practices of teachers of pre-kindergarten classes.

Assumptions

In conducting the study, the researcher assumed the following statements to be true. The study was conducted under the following assumptions:

1. The Child Care Locator, developed and maintained by the Tennessee Department of Human Services, contains information on all child care facilities licensed to serve at least 13 children age 5 and younger.
2. The instructional leader survey instrument accurately measures directors' pedagogical beliefs in the area of literacy.
3. Observations represent typical classroom instruction and procedures.
4. The analysis between respondents and non-respondents supports generalization of the results to the overall population.

Delimitations

In order to conduct the study with minimal error, the study was delimited in the following ways:

1. The study was delimited to child care facilities licensed by the state of Tennessee in Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington counties.
2. The study was delimited to child care facilities that serve at least 13 children age 5 and under.

Limitations

The following limitations affected the outcomes of the study:

1. While results may be generalized concerning the relationship between instructional leaders' characteristics and knowledge and pre-kindergarten

classroom literacy instruction within certain counties in the state of Tennessee, generalizations to preschool instruction in other states and counties should be made with caution.

2. No causality can be determined from these findings.
3. Participants self-reported information concerning their education, experience, beliefs, and practice; hence, the potential for self-report bias exists.

Summary

Over the past two decades, preschool enrollment has risen considerably. With more than two-thirds of all children between the ages of 3 and 5 enrolled in a child care facility, it is important to determine factors that contribute to the educational experiences and outcomes of pre-kindergarten children.

The purpose of this study was to examine the developmental literacy beliefs and leadership behaviors of instructional leaders in early childhood education and explore the relationship between the characteristics and beliefs of instructional leaders of child care facilities and teachers' classroom literacy practices.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The following chapter provides an overview of the theoretical approaches and historical and current literature surrounding literacy development, preschool learning, and educational leadership.

Theoretical Approaches

When considering the role that instructional leaders of child care facilities play in the literacy practices of classroom teachers, it is important to draw upon theoretical frameworks in both leadership and literacy domains. Hence, both Transformational Leadership Theory and Emergent Literacy Theory form the theoretical bases of this study. Both Transformational Leadership Theory and Emergent Literacy Theory follow a constructivist framework based on Vygotsky's theory of social development. Constructivist Learning Theory states that learning is constructed through individual and social experiences. Vygotsky suggests that the learning process results in a gap between independent problem-solving and an individual's potential problem-solving when working under the guidance of a more knowledgeable instructor or in partnership with more capable peers. Thus, the full potential of an individual can only be realized socially through interaction and cooperation with other people (Vygotsky, 1978).

Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership approach views the leader as a change agent who works with people within the organization to bring about improvements in the organizational culture. Recent studies in the United Kingdom have drawn on a 'post transformational' theory of research. The defining feature of this form of leadership is a recognition that a leader is people-

centered and is “constantly and consistently managing several competing tensions and dilemmas” (Harris, 2005, p. 80), a phenomena that is known to exist among leaders in child care (Jorde Bloom, 2000; Morgan, 2000). Transformational leadership has been studied across many contexts such as private corporations, the military, and families. Three core dimensions define transformational leadership across both organizational and school-based settings: vision building; individualized consideration, or a leader’s perceived efforts to meet the needs of others; and intellectual stimulation, the perceived degree to which a leader challenges others to be creative and intentional in their thoughts (Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003). The primary difference between non-school transformational leadership theory and educational transformational leadership theory is the rejection of the notion that the primary factor in successful school leadership is the charisma of the leader (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Many studies suggest that transformational and post-transformational leaders can impact student achievement through improved organizational structures.

In both the traditional school setting and the early childhood education setting, a transformational leader must focus on three major areas: setting the vision, developing staff, and making necessary changes in the organization. The leader must help all members of the staff recognize the primary goals of the school or organization so that they, in turn, may begin to set high expectations for themselves and their students. Next, the school leader must focus on the individual learning strengths and needs of each of the teachers and staff; thereby, helping to propel all members of the school toward meeting the set goals. Finally, the leader must make changes in school processes that foster collaboration among teachers and staff and incorporate necessary adjustments associated with implementation of the new goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Though the main goal of the transformational leader involves improvement of the

organizational culture, for school leaders this translates to improvements in student outcomes (Johnson, 2008).

Instructional leadership is another term that is used widely in the field of educational leadership; however, there is no guiding definition for the construct. Hence, practitioners and researchers employing the term ‘instructional leadership’ may be attributing different meanings to the label. Instructional leadership viewed narrowly is on only those behaviors that directly impact classroom instruction. Used in this regard, instructional leadership is a deficient framework because it neglects all other areas of change that take place within a school. Using a broad conceptualization of instructional leadership, the primary concern of the leader is to develop the school in a manner that leads to improved student achievement through improved instruction. Many studies adopting an instructional leadership model, both broad and narrow, show effects on student outcomes (Harris, 2005). However, studies that conceptualize instructional leadership in a broad manner often describe leadership qualities in terms almost indistinguishable from those of transformational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006)

Constructivist Leadership

In transforming and sustaining successful schools, transformational leaders follow a loose model based on constructivist principles. First, the leader recognizes the importance of vision building in which the leader and the school community develop shared understandings of the school goals and purposes. Next, the leader recognizes that organizational improvement is dependent upon improvement of the skills of people within the school. Hence, the leader encourages each teacher, through intellectual stimulation, support, and modeling, to improve both teaching skills and leadership skills. Finally, the leader works to reorganize the school to

optimize learning and collaboration through strengthened school culture and initiation of collaborative networks (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

In transforming educational organizations, a constructivist leader scaffolds the release of leadership responsibilities of the organization from the central leader, either principal or instructional leader in the childcare setting, to other members of the organization such as teachers, parents, and community members. This release is typically done across a three-stage process. Initially, the leader must encourage the development of vision building, team building and goal setting. In the second phase the leader gradually turns decision making control and leadership responsibilities over to teachers and other members of the school community. Finally, once a school has reached a “high leadership capacity” stage, the central leader shares many of the decisions and responsibilities of the school with teachers and takes on the role of facilitator (Lambert, 2005).

Educational Leaders’ Impact on Classroom Instruction

In the late 1970s Ron Edmonds made a call to social scientists to examine schools more closely to determine what the underlying roots of success are for schools that educate all children regardless of student background (Edmonds, 1979a). In his own explorations of effective schools, Edmonds found that a major factor in the success of a school involved leadership, “One of the most tangible and indispensable characteristics of effective schools is strong administrative leadership, without which the disparate elements of good schooling can neither be brought together nor kept together.” (Edmonds, 1979b)

While Edmonds statement may seem intuitively correct, empirically justifying the link between leadership and outcomes has proven difficult for researchers in the fields of organizational leadership and educational leadership. A plethora of research has been conducted

concerning the influence of educational leaders on student outcomes, yet no templates spelling out the exact characteristics of effective leaders, specific processes for success, or even the best models for distribution of leadership among members of the school community have been generated or are even on the horizon.

Tying educational leadership to school success has proven quite difficult for educational researchers. The leadership role of the principal is complicated because a principal's effectiveness is difficult to separate from the instructional organization of the school, the school climate, and the principal's own characteristics, all of which are hard to define or operationalize for empirical research purposes (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982). Even in a case when a school leader performs in an exceptional manner, most of the improvements in student achievement can be attributed to other factors (Barker, 2007).

In reviewing the research conducted throughout the 1980s and early 1990s on the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement, Hallinger & Heck (1998) found that inconsistencies in findings were due mainly to flawed conceptual models and limited methodological tools available at the time the studies were conducted. Specifically, most research examining the role of principal leadership on student achievement employed a direct-effects model. "The results of direct-effects studies of leadership effects are surprisingly clear. Researchers adopting this model have been unable to produce sound or consistent evidence of leadership effects on student outcomes." (Hallinger & Heck, 1998, p. 166) Additionally, researchers employing a direct-effects model tend to conduct simple correlations employing t tests and chi squares to analyze the data. Beginning in the late 1980s, most researchers studying the leadership-student relationship utilized a mediated-effects framework which looks at the leaders' impact on student outcomes using indirect paths. Using more complicated statistical

techniques, studies adopting a mediated-effects framework consistently show that principals have a small, but statistically significant, indirect effect on school effectiveness.

Transformational and instructional leadership qualities of school leaders have been shown to impact classroom instruction and student achievement. Interestingly, principal leadership, though indirectly tied to student outcomes, has been found to be more statistically significant than teacher leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). The behaviors of school leaders influence teachers' motivation, capacity, and work setting, which in turn, influence teachers' classroom practices (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). One predictor of student achievement is teachers' perception of the school administrator's focus on the school learning climate (O'Donnell & White, 2005).

Principals and school leaders are able to impact student achievement through indirect means. Principals affect student achievement through leadership behavior in the areas of school governance, school climate, and instructional organization (Heck, Marcoulides, & Lang, 1991). Effective leaders are able to influence the organizational climate, teacher and student motivation, and instructional styles of the teachers (Barker, 2001). School leaders have been found to be most effective when they channel their efforts into vision building, intellectually stimulating teachers, and meeting the individual needs of teachers (Geijsel, Slegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003). Marks and Printy (2003) found that when principals integrate transformational leadership qualities with shared instructional leadership qualities, they are able to impact student performance.

Administrators of Child Care Facilities

The instructional leader of a child care facility is important to the quality of that early childhood setting. In many child care facilities, the instructional leader also acts as the head

administrator or director. Hence, a competent director must not only possess the skills and qualities of an effective child care professional, he or she must also have the necessary administrative skills and knowledge to fully oversee the business and management operations of the organization (Talan & Jorde Bloom, 2004).

A director must be a skillful communicator, supervisor, and manager. In order to assure quality, the director must possess competence in eight areas: ability to plan and implement a developmentally appropriate program for children and families; ability to develop and maintain a well-run and effective organization; ability to establish and implement the program's mission and goals; ability to effectively manage and develop staff; ability to influence policy through positive relationships with community members; ability to maintain the physical facility; complete knowledge of laws and licensing requirements related to the child care organizations; and ability to financially manage the facility. Although a director must be competent and knowledgeable in many areas, the ability to recruit and select staff who are able to implement the organization's mission and goals is by far the most important (Morgan, 2000). Finally, competence as a leader in early childhood education is relative and dependent upon the size and complexity of the program, the background and age of the children served, and the type of facility (Jorde Bloom, 2000a).

Most instructional leaders of child care facilities first serve as teachers before assuming their administrative roles. One study explored the transition from teacher to administrator utilizing a multiple case-study design of sixteen child care facilities. Larkin (1999) found that move to administration from teaching left the many leaders of child care facilities feeling isolated and unpopular. Measures that can help temper these feelings include transitioning to an assistant director or lead teacher position before assuming responsibility as lead administrator,

securing a mentor leader to supervise and guide through the initial phases of transition, joining professional organizations and support groups, and teaching college courses.

Even beyond the first year, some instructional leaders continue to feel overwhelmed with their positions. Directors of child care facilities see themselves fulfilling many different functions. In a study in which 257 directors of early care and education facilities characterized the role of director using metaphorical language, most frequently mentioned was the term juggler (Jorde Bloom, 2000b). Directors must often balance multiple tasks and responsibilities and determine which to give priority to each moment. Nearly one-third of directors saw their primary role as a leader or guide in which they must inspire and motivate others. Interestingly, Jorde Bloom found that often a discrepancy exists between how the directors view their actual job performance with their idealized notion of what their role should be. One-half of all participants described the actual job that they do in terms of pacing and/or dealing with the unexpected, most frequently citing the metaphor of a roller coaster. Additionally, many directors reported feeling that “they are expected to be all things to all people” (p. 74).

In a similar study, researchers surveyed child care administrators to determine if their concerns differed according to education, experience, or facility ownership (Austin & Morrow, 1985). Two hundred directors of child care facilities reported their most pressing concerns as administrators. While most directors identified self evaluation, developing a vision, evaluating the quality of the center, and parent communication as their greatest concerns, directors with fewer years of experience and directors who did not have a degree in an early childhood field expressed many more concerns. Additionally, directors who did not own the facility had more concerns than directors who were also owners.

In reviewing the findings of several studies, one early childhood researcher developed a typology of an early childhood leader. Personal characteristics that typify early childhood leaders include kindness, sympathy, ability to rationalize, goal oriented stance, proactive, and influential. Professional skills include the ability to manage people and finances, communicate effectively, and model. Finally, roles and responsibilities span developing and articulating a philosophy, to engaging in professional development, to responding to and managing change (Rodd, 1996).

In an effort to assist early childhood leaders in making literacy learning a priority, Strickland and Riley-Ayers (2007) offer a list of attributes of effective literacy leaders. Their self-assessment tool recommends that early childhood leaders make the development of literacy a top priority in their facilities. Further, they offer a number of criteria based on transformational leadership traits including: holding high expectations of children and teachers, providing moral support, and providing professional development support.

Child Care Directors and Instructional Leaders' Impact on Quality and Instruction

Despite the important role of the director, little research has been conducted to closely examine the influence that the director can have on program quality or classroom instruction. One of the first studies to look at the relationship between the director or administrator of a child care facility and the behavior of subordinate caregivers actually found no relationship (Montgomery & Seefeldt, 1986). The authors concluded, however, that a number of design flaws masked any existing relationships.

Since then other studies have found that child care leaders influence both classroom quality and student outcomes. In looking at children's social development, researchers (Phillips, Scarr, & McCartney, 1987) found that quality of care impacts social development with the best

predictors of social development being director's years of experience and amount of verbal interaction between caregivers and children.

One of the first studies to find a connection between administrator characteristics and classroom practice was the *Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers Study* (Helburn et. al., 1995). The study was a joint venture between child development professionals and economists to gain a better understanding of the levels of quality in child care. Researchers gathered in-depth financial information, program characteristics, and staff information, and conducted observations at 401 child care centers, both for-profit and nonprofit, across four states. The overall findings suggest that child care quality in 86% of centers was poor to mediocre, and that children's cognitive and social development are related to the quality of their care. Additionally, the findings show that years of administrative experience are positively related to quality.

In another study examining quality and effective teaching practices, researchers found a link between quality and supervision. Although effective teaching in early childhood is related to years of formal education, many teachers in the early care setting have little more than a high school diploma. One study which looked at effective teachers with little formal education (Howes, James, & Ritchie, 2003) found a link between quality and supervision. Specifically, quality was predicted by motivation to stay in early childhood teaching out of a sense of responsibility to the community, being mentored, and being supervised in a reflective manner. Further, teachers who received reflective supervision were more likely to engage children in language play and provide language arts activities.

Preschool teachers report that instructional leaders can influence classroom practice through verbal and nonverbal exchanges. Employing critical incident technique, teachers

identified five ways that supervisors facilitate classroom instruction (Rous, 2004). First, teachers stated that supervisors influence instruction through support both in terms of materials and resources as well as through displays of interest and care. Teachers also noted that instructional leaders influence teacher development through instructional feedback, instructional modeling, and through provision of professional development by way of workshop and conference attendance and in-service training. Supervisors who are regularly present in the classroom to offer assistance and interact with children affect teacher performance as do supervisors who praise teachers' efforts. Finally, teachers report that having a supervisor who with an understanding of early childhood development and issues positively influences classroom practice.

Child care directors' professional development endeavors have also been linked to improved classroom quality (Jorde-Bloom & Sheerer, 1992). A total of 22 Head Start lead teachers and directors participated in a 16-month training program that focused on personal and professional self-knowledge (learning and teaching styles); child development and early childhood programming; organizational theory, leadership and program administration; parent and community relations/public policy and advocacy; and research and technology. A control group consisted of 22 Head Start lead teachers and directors who did not receive training. Comparisons between treatment and control classroom observations show improved quality in teaching practices for classrooms whose leaders received training. Further, self-report feedback showed significantly higher perceived levels of knowledge and skill in the five focus areas of training following the professional development. Finally, comparisons of pre- and posttest organizational climate showed improvements in 9 out of 10 dimensions.

Bella and Jorde Bloom (2003) found that leadership training can impact a leader's role perceptions, job performance, and career decisions. In a study examining the effects of two leadership programs on leadership performance, Bella and Jorde Bloom found that individuals in the field of early childhood education had a greater sense of empowerment, heightened feelings of competency, and a greater sense of vision for themselves and their programs following leadership training. Additionally, leadership training improved their management skills and leadership abilities particularly in the areas of interpersonal communication, group facilitation, decision-making, and staff development skills. Finally, leadership training impacted an individual's likelihood of continuing in the field of early childhood education and seeking further professional development.

In a study designed to look at the role of staff turnover for child care centers, Whitebook and Sakai (2004) found that staff turnover, particularly that of the director, affected further staff turnover rates and job satisfaction. Specifically, centers that had lost a director had higher rates of teacher loss. More importantly, teacher behavior at those centers with director turnover was rated as more harsh toward children than at centers with no change in directorship. Finally, directors at centers with higher rates of staff turnover reported less job satisfaction than at centers with less staff turnover.

The role of the administrative leader and the importance of that role has been a recent focus in early care and education. Recognizing the potential contribution that directors of child care facilities can make to the educational and social outcomes of children, a number of leaders in the field have called for the credentialing of directors who have sought professional improvement through graduate coursework and other similar criteria (Culkin, 2000; Jorde Bloom, 1999). A number of states include some type of leadership and management evaluation

in conjunction with their quality ratings of child care facilities (McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership, 2007). Additionally, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (n.d.) incorporates a leadership and management standard in their accreditation criteria.

Emergent Literacy Theory

Traditionally, the process of learning to read has been viewed in terms of reading readiness. The reading readiness approach positions literacy development in terms of stages of proficiency. Under a reading readiness approach, literacy instruction in the early childhood years involves auditory and visual discrimination tasks to prepare children for formal reading instruction to occur in the early years of elementary school (Casbergue & McGee, 2009; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). Emergent literacy theory, on the other hand, views the nature of literacy learning as continuous and gradual. More importantly, emergent literacy is based on constructivist principles which “stress the individualized nature of learning and acknowledge that children construct their own knowledge with varying levels and types of support from those with more skill. Social constructivist researchers and theorists emphasize the importance of embedding skills instruction within meaningful literate activity (Casbergue & McGee, 2009, p.). In contrast, the readiness approach relies on behaviorist theories and views children’s literacy learning as it occurs through reinforcement from teacher or parent initiated stimuli.

The emergent literacy perspective recognizes the importance of all interactions with print and language which in turn contribute to the development of literacy. Four characteristics guide emergent literacy theory: the foundations of learning to read and write begin early in life; literacy learning occurs in real settings in which reading and writing are used to accomplish

authentic tasks; reading and writing develop in tandem and are reciprocal processes; and children learn to become fully literate through lived experiences with reading and writing (Teale & Sulzby, 1989).

Language and Literacy Development

Language development is the first process through which literacy acquisition is made possible. Simply put, print is language in a written form; thus a child's understanding of language in general will assist in the progress of making meaning of written language. Learning environments can either foster and support growth in language acquisition or they can hinder development.

Halliday (2004) contends that a child's acquisition of language takes place through social processes and is shaped by the social and cultural forces of the child's environment. Language acquisition occurs over three phases: pre-symbolic, symbolic-protolinguistic, and symbolic-linguistic. At birth, a child has no content in the adult sense; thus, all meaning is derived from physical interaction with caregivers. Through joint interaction with caregivers, the child gradually begins to construct meaning. Eventually, the child is able to detach himself from his physical environment and begins to try to make meaning through concrete objects. Through shared experiences with another, the child begins to transform information into meaning, and begins to make utterances in the form of showing understanding and trying to be understood. Eventually, the child begins to construct spoken language and is able to share and construct meaning with others through language.

Language and vocabulary development in toddlers and young children can develop rapidly. A child's exposure to language and his experience using language aid in his vocabulary development and phonological sensitivity (Goswami, 2001). By the time a typical child is four,

his language is similar in structure to that of an adult, with a vocabulary of approximately 3,000 words (Glazer, 1989); however, children with limited exposure to and experience with language have slimmer vocabularies and fewer language proficiencies than children with rich and plentiful experience (Hart & Risley, 1995). Advanced general oral language skills, which include a developed vocabulary and understanding of semantics and grammar, are necessary for skilled literacy activity (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005).

A large repertoire of familiar words assists a child in making meaning in language contexts; thus, vocabulary acquisition supports literacy development. Young children are cognitively in a position to acquire words at a great rate. Children are able to add words to their vocabularies through a process of “fast mapping” in which the concept of the word is stored upon first encountering the word, and meaning is added with each subsequent exposure (Carey 1978 as cited in Biemiller, 2006). Additionally, a child at this age can learn words in a physical or verbal context if the new word has a referent that is a known and an associated task. Correlational studies suggest that a child’s word learning occurs in a sequence with a core set of words common among beginning language learners (Biemiller, 2006). Children progressively add more words to this basic foundation with experience and age. A child will acquire a word that she encounters frequently. However, exposure to words is necessary for vocabulary growth to occur; thus, the more experience with varied and complex language, the greater the vocabulary store of an individual.

With greater vocabulary development comes increased phonological sensitivity (Goswami, 2001). As a child begins to acquire words, it becomes necessary to phonologically distinguish one word from another so that meaning can be made both expressively and receptively. As vocabulary acquisition expands, the child begins to represent words in

progressively smaller units. Early in language development, a child discriminates speech at the word level. As the child gains more words, he begins to discriminate them at the syllable level, and then into onset and rime. “Children with large vocabularies who are rapidly acquiring lots of new words would be expected to have lexicons that are experiencing greater pressure for restructuring, and consequently to have represented the syllables, onsets, and rimes in many of the words in their vocabularies” (Goswami, 2001, p. 114). Similar sounding words force the child to distinguish single phonemes; consequently, a child with a larger vocabulary would be expected to have greater phonological sensitivity. Though a large vocabulary alone is not sufficient for later reading success, it is necessary because other more complex oral language skills are dependent on it (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008).

Phonemic awareness, the ability to discriminate and manipulate the smallest sounds within spoken words, is a part within the larger system of general phonological ability (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004). While phonological sensitivity tends to progress naturally with the growth of vocabulary and language experience, phonemic awareness is only fully developed with formal literacy instruction (Ehri & Roberts, 2006). Researchers have examined closely the role of phonemic awareness in learning to read. Decoding print requires sounding out letters into individual sounds and blending them back together to form a word. Conversely, writing requires segmenting words into individual sounds and printing the letter or letters that correspond with the sounds to form written words. Hence, phonemic manipulation is necessary for reading and writing (Ehri et al., 2001). Further, along with naming speed, phonemic awareness ability can predict later reading development (Kirby, Parrila, & Pfeiffer, 2003).

In learning to read and write, a child must alter the oral language acquired in the natural setting for a literate register. Written language differs from oral language in a number of ways

(Sulzby, 1985). Oral language is primarily used in situations where the person speaking is in the same time and place as the person listening; thus, referents made in speech can often be seen and understood. Written language, on the other hand, is much more decontextualized than oral language and referents must be made explicit so that the reader can comprehend the intended meaning. Thus, written language read aloud sounds different from normal speech. A child needs to have an understanding of the differentiation of the two forms of language to read and write proficiently (Cox, Fang, & Otto, 1997).

Full literacy requires knowledge of conventions of written language and reading such as directionality, spacing of words, and knowledge that print carries meaning. This knowledge of written language conventions or concepts of print begins early in childhood with variation in the order of acquisition of different dimensions of print (Hiebert, 1981) and variation in the length of time required to fully develop each (Clay, 2005). Children develop these concepts of print with exposure to written language and experience using written language with a more capable other. Children will be able to demonstrate their understandings of print before they can verbalize exactly what those understandings are, i.e. a child will be able to point out what a word is before he is able to define what is meant by the term 'word' (B. Roberts, 1992). Understanding of basic concepts of print not only makes a unique contribution to the ability to use written language, it also influences acquisition of other components of literacy such as phonemic awareness and word reading (Lomax & McGee, 1987). Further, a strong concept of print is a good predictor of later reading comprehension ability (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008).

Understanding of the alphabetic system upon which the written print is based is also needed for proficient reading and writing. When a child first begins attending to print, the child treats words holistically. As the child begins learning the letters of the alphabet and the names

and sounds associated with those letters, understanding that the phonetic information carried by the letters is used to form words also develops (T. A. Roberts, 2003). Knowledge of letter-sound relationships is necessary for word recognition and proficient reading, and letter-name knowledge at kindergarten is one of the best predictors of subsequent overall literacy ability (Adams, 1990), and a high predictor of later decoding and spelling abilities (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008).

In order to create and decode written language, a child must have knowledge of the purposes of reading and writing and a desire to participate in literacy activities. A child gains an awareness of the many and varied uses of reading and writing initially through observation of others. However, it is not until the child fully participates in a literacy activity that she has a rich understanding of reading and writing. When a child engages in reading and writing activities, she comes to the understanding that written language can be used for a variety of purposes such as experiencing phenomena vicariously, gaining knowledge, expressing oneself, conveying ideas to another, etc. (Neuman & Roskos, 1989).

Preschool Environments that Promote Language and Literacy Development

Knowing the precursors to proficient reading and writing enables child care providers to offer experiences, exposure, and instruction to promote literacy development. “Children need to learn not only the technical skills of reading and writing but also how to use these tools to better their thinking and reasoning” (Neuman, Copple, & Bedekamp, 2000, p. 6). Preschools can not only assist in developing the skills needed for reading and writing, they can provide opportunities for children to experience literacy in natural and meaningful ways.

Reading books aloud to children is one of the best activities in which care givers can engage to nurture literacy development (Neuman et al., 2000). However, it is important that

teachers read quality books of varying genres representing diverse groups (Teale, 2003). When teachers read books to children, it is best if they do so in a dialogic manner; providing rich introductions to books before reading, following the readings with conversations connecting the books to children lives, and extending concepts to known information (Temple & Snow, 2003; Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, 2003).

Dialogic reading is known to affect literacy development in many ways: expressive and receptive vocabulary development is enhanced (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Hargrave & Senechal, 2000; Wasik & Bond, 2001; Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006; Watson, 2001), familiarity with the decontextualized language of the written register is improved (Cox et al., 1997), and content and world knowledge is built. Hence, dialogic reading strengthens future comprehension abilities (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001), and increases understandings of concepts of print (Clay, 2005). Additionally, experiences in group storybook reading help children to develop a set of behaviors associated with formal reading: “knowledge of how to talk like readers, or how to use oral language to interpret decontextualized written language” (Cochran-Smith, 1985, p. 30). Despite the many benefits of reading aloud to children, particularly in a dialogic manner, other practices are also necessary to fully develop children’s literacy and prepare them for future reading and writing success (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008).

Adults can enhance the impacts of reading aloud even further. Repeated readings of books will strengthen the previously mentioned developments, particularly vocabulary growth (Robbins & Ehri, 1994). Through book selection, adults reading to children can target specific skills. Repeated readings of alphabet books, for example, can facilitate children’s letter name learning and phonemic awareness (Greenwald & Kulig, 1995; Murray, Stahl, & Ivey, 1996).

Use of multicultural books can lay a foundation for cultural understanding, and information books can spark children's interest in unfamiliar topics and familiarize them with the specific book language and textual properties of the genre (Pappas, 1991b). Additionally, varying the group size during book reading allows caregivers to target the development of certain skills with specific children and also increase verbal participation of those children (Morrow, 1989; Phillips & Twardosz, 2003). Finally, careful planning of the read-aloud session is more likely to result in a successful read-aloud experience that incorporates effective practice (Shedd & Duke, 2008).

A classroom that promotes cognitive exploration in an atmosphere of cooperation and play helps stimulate language development and higher level thinking. Children construct literacy understandings through classrooms in a variety of ways. Specifically, there is a "reciprocal relationship between the social action and the literate action of school culture and peer culture contexts in a classroom" (Kantor, Miller, & Fernie, 1992). Teachers that take opportunities, such as meal times, to engage children in conversation have students who chose to converse (Bradley, 2004; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Teachers who encourage children to play with words and use newly learned vocabulary develop classrooms where children begin noticing and questioning the unknown vocabulary they encounter and become excited about words (McKeown & Beck, 2005).

In addition to encouraging literacy learning and cooperation, preschool classrooms must have the materials that correspond with reading and writing activities. When books are available and plentiful, reading is more likely to occur (Neuman, 1999), assuming that care providers make proper use of the books (McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, & Brooks, 1999). The placement of literacy objects is important (Morrow, 1990; Morrow & Rand, 1991; Neuman & Roskos, 1990). Literacy materials should be made available to children in separate book and

writing areas as well as being incorporated into other play and learning areas. Additionally, the books that teachers share with children through read-aloud should be made available to them for independent use (Stone & Twardosz, 2001).

Care givers can impact literacy development through classroom design. Children in literacy rich environments spend more time in literacy activities during play than children in typical childcare classrooms (Morrow, 1990; Morrow & Rand, 1991; Morrow, 1992; Wayne, DiCarlo, Burts, & Benedict, 2007). Further, literacy behaviors surrounding literacy objects in typical classrooms tend to have more of an exploratory component in which the child attempts to uncover the use of the object; whereas in literacy enriched environments, children's interactions with literacy tools tend to serve a functional purpose (writing a grocery list). Finally, the presence of literacy objects in a meaningful setting encourages children to use more explicit language in their play (Neuman & Roskos, 1992, 1997).

By encouraging children to express themselves through writing and storytelling, teachers can promote literacy development. When children "pretend read," they are really developing their reading abilities. Children bring four sources of outside information to their emergent readings: illustrations, prior read-aloud information, and prior knowledge and background information from their own experiences and other texts (Elster, 1995). They gradually progress in their reading ability from first regarding individual pages in a book as separate entities to an understanding of a book as a whole used to convey stories through print (Sulzby, 1985).

Literacy related play activities provide children an opportunity to practice and advance skills. Literacy related play can take many forms: children can act out favorite parts of books, they can resolve conflicts or questions concerning a book or character, and they can extend book topics and themes through play (Rowe, 1998). This type of dramatic play facilitates story

comprehension (Pellegrini & Galda, 1982). Further, young children's use of symbolic transformations (pretending that one object is actually a different object) in dramatic play is associated with later writing ability (Pellegrini & Galda, 1993). When literacy materials are added to play centers and their use is encouraged by an adult, the rate of dramatic play increases (Christie & Enz, 1992).

Encouraging children to write will strengthen both further writing and reading, as these two skills are reciprocal. Allowing children opportunities to write bolsters children's phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, letter knowledge and word writing (Aram & Biron, 2004). Through simple encouragement of children to write their own names, child care providers boost children's literacy understandings and abilities. Name writing provides children a few known letters that they can then begin to connect to sounds, providing both insight into the alphabetic principle and a jumping board for transference to unknown words (Bloodgood, 1999).

Teachers of young children can play a significant role in the literacy development and future school success (Campbell, Helms, Sparling, & Ramey, 1998) of their pupils. Through curricular decisions and environmental design, leaders and teachers of preschools and child care facilities can lay a strong foundation for students' literacy understandings and language use. Though at one time there was great debate about the efficacy of promoting literacy in the early care setting (McGill-Franzen, 1992; Schickedanz, 2003), with the advent of the joint position statement of the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Neuman, Copple, & Bedekamp, 2000), most early care providers now believe that such practice is advantageous for young children. Nevertheless, the degree to which such care givers implement best practice in terms of literacy instruction varies widely

(Green, Peterson, & Lewis, 2006; McGill-Franzen, Lanford, & Adams, 2002; Schickedanz, 2003).

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the theoretical frameworks and relevant literature related to the proposed study. I briefly explained the theoretical orientation of the study, and I reviewed the literature on educational leadership that indicates that effective school leaders influence classroom instruction. Additionally, I reviewed literature in the areas of early literacy and language development and current educational practices in preschool classrooms which promote early literacy and language development.

Chapter 3

Materials and Methods

Despite the relatively large number of studies concerning the relationship between teacher characteristics and program quality in the area of early childhood education, there is a lack of research examining instructional leaders' contribution to classroom practice. Further, no studies could be found that examine the literacy knowledge or beliefs of instructional leaders of child care facilities, nor the leaders' contribution to classroom literacy practice. The present study sought to examine more closely instructional leaders' influence in the early childhood setting by determining a) the pedagogical beliefs in the areas of reading, writing, and language development of instructional leaders of preschools; b) the instructional leadership behaviors of the directors and administrators of preschools; and c) whether instructional leaders' education, experience, and/or pedagogical beliefs in the area of literacy contribute to the instructional practices of teachers of pre-kindergarten classes.

This study used a field design with both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Independent variables were the instructional leaders' characteristics including education, experience, knowledge, and leadership behaviors. The primary dependent variable was classroom teachers' instructional practice in the area of literacy.

Population

The population for this study was child care programs licensed by the state of Tennessee Department of Human Services that serve at least 13 children age 5 or under in the following counties: Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington. Child care programs included Head Start programs; Tennessee Department of Education approved school pre-k programs; non-profit child care programs, both those that are religious-affiliated as

well as those connected to a community agency or organization; and for-profit programs, both corporate sponsored facilities and franchises and independently owned and operated businesses.

Sampling Frame

The sampling frame for this study was the Child Care Locator (<http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/childcare/providers-map.htm>) provided and maintained by the Tennessee Department of Human Services. The locator included information on all licensed child care facilities in the state of Tennessee. The locator is updated daily (on working business days), and is organized by county and zip codes within counties. The locator provided demographic information on the 3,803 center-based providers who serve 13 or more children and the 1,264 providers who serve 12 or fewer children in either child care centers or private homes.

Demographic information for each facility included center name, address, phone number, primary contact, licensed capacity, range of ages of the children for whom the center is licensed to provide care, hours of operation, participation status in the state's child care assistance program for low income and at-risk children, any discounts offered by the center, whether the center's facilities are handicap accessible, and whether transportation is available through the center. The locator also provided information about each center's Star Quality Rating, a voluntary quality rating system monitored by the Tennessee Department of Human Services Child Care Services (Tennessee Department of Human Services Child Care Services, n.d.), including the overall rating as well as ratings for each of seven program areas.

The locator contained information on all child care facilities licensed by the state of Tennessee, both facilities for early child care as well as facilities for care of school-aged children. Of the 3,803 centers across the state that serve 13 or more children, 2,889 are licensed

to provide care for children under the age of 5 years. Within the eight targeted counties of this study, 209 met the criteria for inclusion in the study.

Phase I

Sampling Procedures

Because of the relatively small population eligible to participate in this study, all child care programs licensed by the state of Tennessee Department of Human Services that serve at least 13 children age 5 or under in Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington were invited to take part in the first phase of this study; thereby reducing the margin of error in reporting findings (Baumann & Bason, 2004). The primary investigator called the instructional leader at each facility to request completion of a survey concerning demographic information about the facility and the directors' education, experience, behaviors, and beliefs. A total of 106 individuals (98 females and 8 males), representing 168 of the 209 facilities eligible to participate in the study, completed the entire survey for a total participation rate of 80.38% (Table 1). An additional three instructional leaders began the survey but did not complete it, and 15 others agreed to answer the survey but did not. Seven individuals refused to participate, and four could not be reached despite multiple attempts. Finally, two school systems with a total of nine preschool programs declined to participate.

The state of Tennessee Department of Human Services facilitates a voluntary child care program quality rating system. Through this program, child care facilities are rated on a scale of zero to three in seven areas. An evaluator assigns participating child care programs an overall star quality between zero and three based on an average of the ratings in each of the seven evaluation areas (Tennessee Department of Human Services Child Care Services, n.d.). In terms

of star quality rating, an independent samples T-test of respondents verse non-respondents revealed that they were not significantly different.

Survey Instrument

This study utilized a researcher-developed survey instrument (Appendix A) that contained the Preschool Teacher Literacy Beliefs Questionnaire (TBQ) (Seefeldt, 2004). The purpose of the survey was to gather demographic information about the facility as well as information about the instructional leaders' formal education, experience, pedagogical beliefs in the area of literacy, and leadership behaviors. For validation purposes, fourteen experts in the fields of child development and literacy evaluated the survey. Several experts suggested minor wording and formatting changes only. Additionally, instructional leaders at six facilities responded to the instrument and then completed the survey again one to two weeks later. Test re-test data showed no significant differences.

Instructional leaders provided information about their child care centers and themselves through the survey instrument. The survey solicited the following information pertaining to the center: type of facility, length of instructional day, number of children enrolled, the number of staff, and tuition per child. Additionally, the survey instrument requested the instructional leader to provide information about his/her role in the facility; years of experience in each capacity of child care; racial or ethnic identity; gender; level of formal education and field of study; certifications, licenses, and endorsements; participation in professional development opportunities focused on developmental literacy; and primary modes of gathering information on developmental literacy. The survey also solicited information about the participants' instructional leadership behaviors including hiring priorities; provisions made to support new staff; methods for evaluating teacher instruction and providing instructional feedback for

teachers; and professional development decision making. Through the survey instrument, instructional leaders reported specific things they do or have done that influence classroom literacy practice, and also identified obstacles that they encounter in promoting literacy in their facilities. Finally, in responding to the survey the instructional leaders completed the TBQ (Seefeldt, 2004) by indicating a level of agreement, using a five-point scale, with thirty developmental literacy and language belief statements.

The TBQ (Seefeldt, 2004) contains thirty questions designed to assess an individual's knowledge of best practices in the area of literacy and language development. The measure contains four subscales: book reading; writing; oral language and vocabulary; and code-related skills. The book reading subscale consists of five items. Six items form the writing subscale. The remaining two subscales consist of nine items each. One statement in the TBQ concerns general practice and does not fall within any of the four subscales. Twelve items that do not reflect best practice based on research findings are reverse coded. Hindman and Wasik (in press) report a reliability alpha of .87 for the TBQ overall, with all four subscales meeting acceptable internal consistency and variability.

Procedures

Instructional leaders at each of the 209 facilities included in this study were contacted by telephone. The initial phone call informed the directors of the purpose of the study and requested participation. Because early childhood educators are traditionally skeptical of participating in research projects (Rodd, 1998), the researcher attempted to put the participants at ease by explaining the benign nature of this study and the protections put in place to ensure anonymity in the reporting of results. Additionally, the researcher offered participants the incentive of being included in two random drawings for a \$25 gift certificate for the purchase of

books. Instructional leaders who agreed to participate had the option of completing the survey orally, electronically, or in print.

Instructional leaders agreeing to complete the survey orally had the option of responding to the survey immediately or arranging another time for the researcher to call. The researcher asked participants responding by phone each question in order and recorded the responses on a print copy of the survey. Upon completion of the survey, the researcher thanked the participant for her time then entered the participant's responses into the database via the online survey instrument.

Instructional leaders who agreed to complete the survey online were asked to provide an email address. The researcher sent an email containing a numeric access code and survey link to each online participant. Additionally, the email restated that participation was voluntary and that anonymity would be maintained in the reporting of results. The online survey instrument was delivered through SPSS mrInterview. The online survey instrument gave the participant brief directions for completing the survey before allowing the participant to respond to each item. Within one week of completion, the researcher sent a second email to online participants thanking them for their participation.

Instructional leaders who agreed to participate online but who did not complete the survey within one week were sent a follow-up email requesting their participation. Up to a total of four follow-up requests were sent weekly to instructional leaders who agreed to participate but did not complete the online survey.

The researcher requested a fax number from those participants agreeing to complete the survey via facsimile. The researcher faxed a copy of the survey along with a cover sheet containing a return fax number within 24 hours of speaking with the participant. Two weeks

following the transmission of surveys via fax, the researcher again telephoned the participants who did not return the faxed surveys and again requested their participation.

The researcher verified the mailing address of the child care facility with those participants who agreed to complete the survey via U.S. mail. The researcher mailed the print survey and a self-addressed stamped envelope within 24 hours of speaking with the participant. After two weeks, the researcher again telephoned participants who did not return the mailed surveys and again requested their participation.

Phase II

Participants

For the second phase of the study, classroom teachers were observed using the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Pre-K Tool (ELLCO) (Smith, Brady, & Anastasopoulos, 2008). Based on the instructional leaders' responses to the TBQ portion of the survey, the primary investigator ranked the facilities. For each facility type (i.e. public school preK, religious-affiliated child care, community based child care), the primary investigator called one instructional leader with a top ranking to request participation in the second phase of the study. All instructional leaders contacted for participation in phase two, with the exception of the principal of a public school prekindergarten, agreed to participate; however, the instructional leader of another highly ranked public school facility did agree to participate in the second phase of the study.

All instructional leaders who participated in the second phase of the study were female and had over 10 years of experience in child care; however, in terms of education, they varied considerably (Table 2). Eleven lead teachers at eight facilities including a public school prekindergarten, a privately owned child care, two Head Start programs (under the direction of

one instructional leader), one religious-affiliated program, one corporate sponsored program, one national child care franchise facility, and one college campus child care facility participated in the second phase of the study. All teachers who participated in the second phase of the study were female. As with the instructional leader participants, the teachers varied noticeably in terms of education, but they also differed in terms of experience (Table 3).

Observation Instrument

The Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation Pre-k Tool (ELLCO) (Smith, Brady, & Anastasopoulos, 2008) guided the observation and quality measurement of classroom practice and instruction. The ELLCO is an observation instrument designed to rate the language and literacy environment of early childhood classrooms. Though the ELLCO has a definite focus on language and literacy, it can also be used to measure global quality as it contains sections centering on general classroom environments and processes. The ELLCO consists of nineteen items organized into five general sections: Classroom Structure; Curriculum; Language Environment; Books and Book Reading; and Print and Early Writing. The first two sections, Classroom Structure and Curriculum, contain a total of seven items which are scored to give a quality measure of the general classroom environment. The remaining three sections, Language Environment, Books and Book Reading, and Print and Early Writing, contain a total of twelve items which are scored for a measure of the quality of language and literacy processes and structures in the classroom. To date there are no studies that have addressed the reliability and validity of this recently revised ELLCO; however, the tool is a modification of the ELLCO Toolkit (Smith, Dickinson, Sangeorge, & Anaastasopoulos, 2002). The technical report of the ELLCO Toolkit, found in the ELLCO Pre-K Tool User's Guide (Smith, Brady, & Anastasopoulos, 2008), reports a Chronbach's alpha of .90 for the Classroom Observation total

score and is based on observations in over 300 prekindergarten classrooms. Additionally, Smith, Brady, and Anastasopoulos (2008) report the moderate correlation ($r=.44$) between the Classroom Observation portion of the ELLCO Toolkit and the Learning Environment subscale of the Classroom Profile (Abbott-Shimm & Sibley, 1988) as proof of the instrument's validity.

Joint observations between two researchers across two separate observation sessions in two separate classrooms established the claims of intrarater consistency. The interrater reliability across the two observations was .89 with all differences on individual item ratings within one point.

Procedures

Instructional leaders were ranked according to their scores on the Preschool Teacher Literacy Beliefs Questionnaire (Seefeldt, 2004) portion of the survey. In the interest of observing classroom practice most likely to be of high quality, the researcher chose to focus on those classrooms under the supervision of leaders with beliefs most congruent with research findings in the area of developmental literacy and effective classroom practices.

For each facility type (i.e. public school pre-k, Head Start, church-based child care, etc.), the researcher contacted an instructional leader with a top score and requested participation in the second phase of the study. The researcher explained the second phase of the study on the phone and also via email to each of the instructional leaders considered for phase two of the study. Those agreeing to participate provided contact information for all teachers of prekindergarten classrooms (classrooms with children who will attend kindergarten the next school year). The researcher contacted the teachers of the prekindergarten classrooms, informed them of the purpose of the study, and asked them to participate in the study.

The researcher arranged an observation with each classroom teacher. Before scheduling a time and day, the researcher expressed to each teacher the desire to come on a day that would represent a typical day of classroom activity and a time when the majority of the literacy activities would take place. All observations spanned a three hour time period. The researcher used the ELLCO to guide the collection of data during observations.

Data Collection

Data collected from the online surveys using SPSS mrInterview automatically transferred to an SPSS file, and the researcher entered all telephone survey responses into the online instrument. Despite efforts from the researcher, no participants returned mailed or faxed surveys.

The researcher reviewed immediately, to check for data entry errors, all survey data obtained from oral responses that were subsequently entered into the online survey instrument. The researcher then placed all print survey forms that were used to record oral responses in a folder for future reference if necessary.

During classroom observations, the researcher took running field notes including direct quotes, information about class, teacher, and student participation in both planned and free-choice activities, and classroom design, organization, and materials. Immediately following each classroom observation, the researcher assigned and recorded each ELLCO item score, as well as written evidence for the score, on the designated pages in the observation form. Following assignment of scores for each item, the researcher transferred the scores from the designated pages to the score form and calculated the subtotal scores for each section, the General Classroom Environment Subscale total, the Language and Literacy Subscale total, the average subscale scores for both subscales, and the total ELLCO score. All ELLCO scores from a single facility were averaged to produce one set of scores for each facility. The researcher entered data

from the ELLCO score sheets into the SPSS file containing the survey data. The researcher then reviewed immediately each score sheet to check for data entry errors. The researcher placed all score sheets in a folder for future reference if necessary.

Variables

Facility characteristics

Facility characteristics include center or school affiliation, schedule, enrollment, number of staff, and child care tuition. Instructional leaders reported all facility characteristics with items one through five on the survey instrument.

Personal characteristics

Personal characteristics include role, gender, race, education, experience, and literacy-focused professional development. Instructional leaders self-reported all personal characteristics with items six through 15 on the survey instrument.

Leadership behaviors

Leadership behaviors include hiring priorities in terms of education and experience, supports for new staff, supervision of staff, means of providing instructional feedback for staff, methods for staff professional development, and processes for allocating resources to classroom teachers.

Developmental literacy beliefs

Developmental literacy beliefs were measured by degree of agreement with “best practice” statements on the TBQ. Instructional leaders’ degree of agreement with statements within each construct determined their beliefs regarding that area of literacy development.

Classroom practice

Classroom practice refers to the quality of classroom interactions and environment and was measured with the ELLCO. Classroom practice is further divided into the five areas measured within the ELLCO: Classroom Structure; Curriculum; Language Environment; Books and Book Reading; and Print and Early Writing. Finally, general classroom environment and language and literacy were measured in accordance with ELLCO guidelines.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics formed the dominant bases of this study. For the survey data, descriptive statistical analyses were conducted on all data, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies. Additionally, Chi squares and Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were performed to identify associations between developmental literacy beliefs, personal characteristics, and instructional leadership behaviors. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance for all statistical tests.

For observational data, descriptive statistical analyses were conducted on the overall ELLCO scores, including mean and standard deviation. Additionally, running field notes were analyzed to determine general trends across each classroom and facility.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the literacy beliefs and instructional leadership behaviors of directors of child care facilities and to investigate whether instructional leaders' beliefs were related to teachers' instructional practices in the areas of language development, reading, and writing.

Instructional leaders' of child care facilities and teachers of pre-kindergarten classes in upper east Tennessee were the focus of this study. Data related to education, experience,

pedagogical beliefs concerning literacy, and leadership behaviors were collected from directors through a survey instrument. Data on instructional practice and classroom structure were collected with the ELLCO observation instrument. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used to examine the survey and observational data. Additionally field notes from the observations were analyzed to determine general trends for each classroom and facility.

Chapter 4

Results

What are the pedagogical beliefs in the areas of reading, writing and language development of instructional leaders of child care facilities?

The present study sought to determine instructional leaders' pedagogical knowledge and beliefs in the areas of reading, writing, and language development. The TBQ was used to measure instructional leaders' beliefs about best practices in terms of literacy learning. Sum scores on the TBQ ranged from 91 to 139 points (with possible scores from 30 to 150 points) with an average score across the sample of 119.29 (S.D.=9.81). Additionally, for each individual, a total mean score and mean scores for each construct were calculated for the purpose of determining central tendency. Finally, the total mean score and each of the mean construct scores were averaged across instructional leaders to create grand mean scores. Scores above 4 indicate agreement or strong agreement with research-based best practice. Instructional leaders' mean scores (Table 4) indicate that as a whole their beliefs are consistent with best practice in terms of overall literacy development. Further examination of the four constructs within the TBQ, book reading; writing; oral language and vocabulary development; and decoding skills, however, reveals those areas where instructional leaders are most knowledgeable, as well as, the domains of literacy development where instructional leaders may not have the most accurate information in terms of best practice.

Instructional leaders' beliefs are most consistent with best practice and literacy development in the areas of book reading and writing. Five items on the TBQ assessed beliefs concerning book reading, and six items assessed writing beliefs. More than 80% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with all items concerning best practice in the areas

of reading and writing (Table 5). Further, nearly all (90% or more) of the instructional leaders completing the survey indicated agreement or strong agreement with four of the eleven items. Only one item showed a lack of congruence between respondents' beliefs and recent research.

Nine items comprised the oral language and vocabulary construct of the TBQ. Overall results show relatively close alignment between instructional leaders' beliefs and research concerning best practice and development in the area of oral language and vocabulary ($M=4.18$, $S.D.=.40$), but closer examination of individual items reveals areas where such agreement is weaker. One-third of all respondents were in agreement with the reversely-coded item, "Preschool children do not need to learn the meaning of a lot of words to become good readers." Further, more than half of the instructional leaders disagreed with best practice on two additional items, "Preschool children need to learn a lot of words so they can learn to read," and "Preschool children should be taught to speak in complete sentences."

Instructional leaders' beliefs showed the weakest agreement with best practice and development in the area of code knowledge. The mean construct score ($M = 3.58$, $S.D. = .38$) reveals weak agreement overall, and closer examination of individual TBQ items is even more telling. Only two of the nine code-related items showed agreement for more than 80% of the respondents. Further, the majority of instructional leaders either had no opinion about or disagreed with best practice or development on four items. Hence, on seven items a large number of the respondents did not hold beliefs supported by recent research in the area of developmental literacy.

Given the great variability within each of the constructs, Chronbach reliability alphas were run for the TBQ as a whole and for each of the four constructs. Using the generally accepted alpha of .60, results suggest that the instrument may need some revisions. In all cases,

the reliability alphas using this data were much lower than those obtained by Hindman and Wasik (in press) in their study of Head Start teachers (Table 6). According to results from this study, only the Chronbach alphas for the instrument as a whole and the language construct meet the acceptable cutoff.

Difference in Beliefs in Terms of Leaders' Characteristics

Further examination of the instructional leaders' developmental literacy beliefs according to education, experience, and literacy-focused professional development paints an interesting picture. Leaders' education and years of experience were both related to the amount of literacy-focused professional development in which they participated, $X^2 (8, N= 108) = 17.69, p=.024$ (Table 7) and $X^2 (8, N= 108) = 22.27, p=.004$ (Table 8) respectively. However, leaders' education and experience were not significantly related to each other. Additionally, years of experience was not significantly related to leaders' total developmental literacy beliefs nor their beliefs in any of the four construct areas of reading, writing, language, and decoding.

Both formal education and amount of literacy-focused professional development seem to impact the developmental literacy beliefs of instructional leaders. Specifically, leaders' levels of education were related to their overall developmental literacy beliefs and also beliefs across all four constructs (Table 9). Examination of post-hoc Tukey tests indicate that, with the exception of reading, leaders with only a high school diploma differed significantly from leaders with higher levels of formal education. In terms of reading, leaders with higher levels of formal education held beliefs aligned more closely with research-based best practice, but differences did not reach significance at the college degree level.

The amount of literacy-focused professional development in which the leaders participated was also related to their overall developmental literacy beliefs and their beliefs

across all four constructs (Table 10). Leaders who participated in any literacy-focused professional development scored higher on average in all areas than leaders who did not. However, examination of post-hoc Tukey tests reveal that differences did not reach significance across the board, but pointed to the conclusion that the beliefs of those who did not participate in any literacy-focused professional development within the past five years were not as close to best practice as those who had participated in at least some.

What are the instructional leadership behaviors of early childhood educational leaders?

There was much variability in the reported instructional leadership practices of early childhood leaders. First, instructional leaders varied greatly in terms of hiring practices. Nearly half of all instructional leaders (47.2%) were willing to hire a lead teacher with only a high school diploma, though 25% reported they would not hire lead teachers with less education than a bachelor's degree. Additionally, most leaders (57.4%) had a minimum requirement of at least one year of experience in early care or education for individuals hired for lead teacher positions.

In addition to reporting priority differences in hiring practices, instructional leaders also reported differences in the level of support they provide for new staff. Though all leaders in this study had some support in place for new staff, they differed in terms of support types. Many instructional leaders (86.1%) reported that they provide new staff with a formal orientation, and most (89.8%) also conduct regular observations with feedback. Additionally, over half (63.9%) of the leaders reported assigning an experienced mentor to support new staff.

In terms of instructional supports for staff overall (both new and returning staff), the instructional leaders again varied in their practice. Though nearly all (91.7%) conducted some type of formal observation of teachers with either written and/or oral feedback (96.3%), the frequency with which this was carried out differed (Table 11). Additionally, while most

instructional leaders (98.1%) had some type of professional development plan in place, there was great variability in how leaders determined the professional development needs of staff (Table 12). Finally, to ensure that teachers had the materials necessary to carry out instruction, three-fourths of all instructional leaders provided teachers with a basic inventory of supplies with provisions in place for teachers to request additional materials. Another 17.6% of instructional leaders gave teachers a budget to purchase their own supplies. Though eight instructional leaders reported an alternative plan for meeting the instructional material needs of their teachers, some of the explanations were quite similar to the descriptions already given. For example, one leader stated, “most materials are on hand and teachers are encouraged to make requests for needed materials but often they purchase them on their own with their own funds.”

Difference in Leadership Behaviors in Terms of Leaders' Characteristics

Participants' leadership behaviors differed to some extent according to their own educational level, experience, and participation in literacy-focused professional development. The data showed significant differences in the reported minimum educational requirements for lead teachers according to the leaders' own education, $X^2(8, N = 108) = 35.56, p < .001$. With one exception, no leader required that lead teachers have a higher educational attainment than the leader's own education; thus, all 12 leaders with a high school diploma were willing to hire lead teachers with only a high school diploma. In contrast, none of the leaders with doctoral degrees was willing to hire a lead teacher who did not have additional training beyond a high school diploma. Additionally, differences in allocation of materials were reported according to the leaders' education (Table 13), $X^2(18, N = 108) = 33.75, p = .014$.

Differences in leadership behaviors were also seen according to the leaders' own experience and participation in literacy-focused professional development. Leaders' years of

experience was significantly related to whether or not they assigned new teachers with an experienced mentor (Table 14) $X^2 (2, N = 108) = 10.55, p = .005$. Additionally, the leaders' participation in literacy professional development was significantly related to a number of instructional leadership behaviors: minimum education hiring requirements for lead teachers (Table 15), $X^2 (16, N = 108) = 27.96, p = .032$; formal orientation for new staff (Table 16), $X^2 (4, N = 108) = 9.84, p = .043$; observations of new staff (Table 17), $X^2 (4, N = 108) = 11.41, p = .022$; frequency of teacher observations (Table 18), $X^2 (20, N = 108) = 33.03, p = .034$; type of instructional feedback given to teachers and staff (Table 19), $X^2 (12, N = 108) = 26.11, p = .010$; and the allocation of instructional materials (Table 20), $X^2 (12, N = 108) = 33.72, p = .001$.

Do instructional leaders' developmental literacy beliefs affect the instructional practices of teachers of prekindergarten classes?

Quantitative Results

The final area that this study sought to examine was if instructional leaders' developmental literacy beliefs affect the instructional practices of teachers of prekindergarten classes. The range of scores on the ELLCO (Table 21) reflects the variability in classroom instruction in the preschool setting. Sum scores on the ELLCO ranged from 30 to 87 points (with possible scores from 18 to 95 points) with an average score across the sample of 64.64 (S.D.=22.13). The Language and Literacy Subscale scores, those scores that indicate the position of the environment and practice in terms of literacy opportunities for children, were even more wide-ranging with scores falling between 15 and 54 points (with possible scores between 11 and 60).

The overall quality of the language and literacy environments and practices in the classrooms provided differing levels of support for children. Four of the classrooms had average

literacy and language subscale scores of four or higher (on a five-point scale), indicating relatively higher quality literacy and language supports in place. Three of the classrooms had an average language and literacy subscale score between 3.0 and 3.9 indicating average support for language and literacy development. The remaining four classrooms did not have supports in place to promote the overall development of language and literacy for children indicated by average language and literacy subscale scores below 3.0.

Qualitative Results

Though statistical analyses of instructional leader beliefs and teacher practice relationships might yield insight, such computations are not possible in this study because of the limited sample size (N=7). However, through the portraits below, “details are selected to depict and display general phenomena about people and place” (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 7) in the interest of presenting teachers’ literacy practice, leaders’ behaviors, and possible links that might exist between the two. The portraits are an attempt to capture the essence of the classroom culture but also tend to instigate further questions. Pseudonyms have been used in lieu of actual names for all facilities and teachers.

The Shepherd’s Flock

Marci is the director of The Shepherd’s Flock Preschool, a church-based half-day program that serves between 50-100 children of primarily middle-class stay-at-home mothers. Marci has a bachelor’s degree and has served as the director of The Shepherd’s Flock for the past 11 years. She also has seven years of experience as an early childhood classroom teacher. Over the past two years, Marci has participated in four to five literacy-focused professional development offerings and has also earned the director credential offered through the Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA). She feels that her center is well prepared to

provide for the developmental literacy needs of the children served. Marci oversees a collection of books for the preschool. Additionally, all teachers at The Shepherd's Flock Preschool have their own collections of children's books. Finally, Marci feels fortunate that the school is geographically close to a branch of the public library and has arranged for the teachers to take the children there for weekly storytime visits.

All three of the prekindergarten classroom teachers at The Shepherd's Flock Preschool provided a safe, nurturing, and loving environment for children. Each of the prekindergarten teachers has earned a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, and each has over ten years of experience teaching young children. Children attending The Shepherd's Flock Preschool likely start kindergarten with positive feelings towards school and learning as all observed interactions between teachers and children were positive. The classrooms at The Shepherd's Flock were all large, attractively furnished and well organized. In each classroom, children had access to a number of books in the designated book area, though few books could be found in other areas of the classroom.

Children at The Shepherd's Flock expressed their opinions and ideas to teachers who listened respectfully and provided opportunities for further verbal interactions between children. The teachers all knew the children and families well and were able to extend children's conversations through questioning. Though children sang a number of songs and participated in fingerplays and action rhymes, only one of the three teachers incorporated any activities focused specifically on sounds and initiated for the purpose of promoting phonemic awareness. All three of the teachers drew children's attention to at least one unique word or phrase; however, vocabulary learning did not seem to be a priority for any of the teachers. All of the teachers encouraged children to read books independently or with partners, and all read-aloud, in a formal

book reading session, a minimum of three books with varying levels of conversation surrounding the book readings. Writing clearly was not a focus at The Shepherd's Flock as there were very few opportunities or materials for children to practice this skill. Environmental print was utilized in one of the classrooms but not at all in the other two.

Teachers at The Shepherd's Flock provided adequate but not outstanding overall language and literacy environments and opportunities for children. The general language environment and book reading components in the classrooms were much stronger than the print environment and writing opportunities. Only one teacher at The Shepherd's Flock really drew children's attention to environmental print and very little evidence pointed to support for children's writing. On the other hand, all children were encouraged to converse with the teachers and each other, and all children had opportunities to interact with books independently and in whole groups.

Wonderful Kids

Shannon Roman is the owner and director of Wonderful Kids, a private child care facility serving children as young as 6 weeks-of-age in a rural county. In addition to the children that come to Wonderful Kids for full-day care, Shannon and her staff also serve children in before- and after-school programs. Shannon has owned and taught at this facility for 18 years. After seeing the educational benefits her daughter gained in earning her CDA (Child Development Associate Certificate), Shannon also took part in and completed a CDA program. Shannon continues to improve her knowledge through continuing education opportunities offered by TECTA and through participation in more than five literacy-focused professional development opportunities over the past two years.

Shannon clearly works within a limited budget to provide for the needs of the children. Much of the furniture at Wonderful Kids, though for the most part appropriately sized, is clearly aged and has a discount-store quality. Additionally, Shannon cooks, cleans, and takes part in teaching in an effort to save money. In response to a question about obstacles encountered in trying to promote literacy for children, Shannon stated, “MONEY!!! To replace books, bookcases, rugs, pillows, and to hire and train staff.”

Shannon’s daughter Allison works as the prekindergarten teacher at Wonderful Kids. After graduating from high school, Allison began teaching in the three-year-old classroom at Wonderful Kids. Allison earned a CDA, and moved to the prekindergarten classroom where she has been for the past year-and-a-half. Allison regards the children under her care with kindness and consideration. The children, including her nephew who is often behaviorally disruptive, tended to regard Allison more as a big sister and failed to treat her with the respect of a teacher. Though Allison tried to set high expectations for the children’s behavior, she did not consistently follow through and often reacted rather than taking precautionary measures to facilitate proper behavior. Though she claimed that the day proceeded much like a normal day, the day that I observed her classroom, the public school had scheduled a two-hour snow delay resulting in an extra 10 children in her class for a large portion of the morning.

Allison kept the children under her care safe and entertained, though her contribution to their literacy development was somewhat lacking. Both Allison and Shannon, who spent most of the morning in the prekindergarten classroom, provided a favorable discourse climate for the children, but the language environment overall left much to be desired. Both Allison and Shannon missed opportunities to extend conversations, failed to address vocabulary development, and did not provide any opportunities to build phonological awareness. Similarly,

the opportunities for literacy learning in the realm of books and book reading were less than stellar. Though the classroom had a designated book area, the number, quality, and selection of books were not up to par. No formal book reading took place; however, Shannon did read informally for about thirty minutes with a small group of children, upon their request.

Opportunities for children to engage in writing or to observe functional print were very limited. Almost no environmental print was posted in the classroom, almost no print was used in the service of procedures or learning, and there was very little evidence that children engaged in any form of writing at all, including the writing of their own names. Interestingly, when the children were instructed to color a picture, one child decided instead to write words. Both Allison and Shannon praised the child and read her words but did not encourage any other children to write.

Clearly the language and literacy experiences at Wonderful Kids did not support the developmental needs of the children. However, despite the absence of an environment geared toward promoting learning, both Shannon and Allison worked to keep the children in their care safe and busy. Both adults treated the children kindly and with respect. Though children were not cognitively challenged at Wonderful Kids, they were all happy and safe.

Children's Corner

Michelle is the director of Children's Corner, a locally owned and operated franchised childcare facility. Michelle has a CDA and has worked a total of thirteen years in early care and education as both a classroom teacher and director. Michelle came to Children's Corner as the director one year ago and confessed that one obstacle that she encounters in promoting literacy for children is, "teachers not being passionate about offering the experiences for children or not being open to new practices and techniques." Michelle is very well informed about best

practice for children, and though she conducts multiple classroom observations, her knowledge does not translate into high quality literacy experience for children.

Ms. Wanda, a CDA trained teacher with over thirty years of experience in early care and education, was the lead teacher of the prekindergarten class at Children's Corner. Despite Ms. Wanda's years of experience and specialized training, neither her rapport with children nor her classroom organizational practices promoted an ordered environment conducive to literacy development or acceptable social development.

Perhaps due to the lack of enthusiasm and stimulation, children continually fought with each other both physically and verbally. Ms. Wanda was inconsistent in her response to offensive behavior, but generally gave an air of indifference. While the children arrived and played in centers, Ms. Wanda talked to the teacher across the room partition, talked to me, or reviewed her lesson plan, a packaged curriculum with a scripted lesson and accompanying children's books.

With one exception, Ms. Wanda only interacted with the children individually if they initiated the exchange or were physically hurting others. She did approach one child who was lying down and asked him how he was feeling before taking his temperature.

Though her classroom, a portion of a much larger room, could have been organized to promote child exploration and creativity, it was not. The science center contained random science supplies but nothing to suggest how they might be related. A gross motor area held a bin labeled, "Cars and Trucks," but it held dinosaurs. An easel in the art area held a large sheet of paper captioned, "What I learned at preschool today" and two paint canisters with paintbrushes cemented into the dried paint.

The literacy environment of the classroom was as pathetic as the general learning environment. One portion of the wall held large theme-decorated cardboard letters (i.e. a quilted Q, P with pom-poms, etc.); unfortunately, the display contained only 19 of the letters, all uppercase, with one letter hung backwards. The book area contained a book shelf designed to promote child interest in books and reading, but because of lack of attention, it had the opposite effect. The shelf held seven books, all of which were non-fiction and in good condition, but many were turned either upside down, backwards, or both. Not only did the classroom lack a writing center or designated area designed for writing, with exception of the crayons and markers found in the art center (which were out of the children's reach), the classroom contained no writing materials.

The Children's Corner curriculum, which Ms. Wanda used, contained materials organized around the theme of bugs and plants. Ms. Wanda gathered the children for large-group time, but did not carry out the lesson in its scripted form or in its entirety. Ms. Wanda began the lesson with a stack of cards, each containing one year of the month. "Who can tell me this one?" A child answered, "April." Ms. Wanda turned to the next card and a child called out, "March!" Ms. Wanda shook her head. Another child shouted, "May!" After going through all of the month cards, the class focused attention on the days of the week and recited them in order. Ms. Wanda then asked, "What is today?" One child responded, "Friday." Ms. Wanda pointed to the label Thursday on the calendar and said, "Sound it out." The children randomly called out days of the week, and Ms. Wanda again said, "Sound it out." The children continued to shout out names of days. Finally, Ms. Wanda pointed to the label Thursday and said, "Sound it out. Thur..." to which the children responded in unison, "Thursday."

The content portion of the whole-group lesson proceeded in a similar fashion. Ms. Wanda reminded the children that the current theme was bugs and insects. Using a stack of pictures with insects, Ms. Wanda tried to illicit the names of insects from the children, “What picture is this?” When Ms. Wanda came to the picture of a preying mantis, one child called out, “Cricket.” “No,” said Ms. Wanda. Another child said, “Mantis.” “Why is it called that?” asked Ms. Wanda. The children gave answers concerning its color and body features. Ms. Wanda then said, “Look at its feet.” To which a child responded, “They’re jumping.” “No,” said Ms. Wanda, “They’re praying.”

Ms. Wanda had a fiction book and a concept book tied to the theme of the lesson. In presenting the color concept book, Ms. Wanda asked the children to identify the plant or fruit on each page. If the children correctly identified the picture, she turned the page. If the children incorrectly named the plant or fruit, she shook her head and waited until a child provided the correct name. After several incorrect answers, she eventually told the children the correct name and moved on. After completing the concept book, Ms. Wanda held up the fiction book for the children to see the cover. As an introduction, she said, “Oh, what do you like to play in?” The children answered “Mud.” Neglecting to mention the title or author and illustrator, Ms. Wanda began to read. Ms. Wanda’s unfamiliarity with the book was apparent in her reading of the first page. She read in a manner that was neither fluent nor engaging. One child stood up and went to the bathroom. A second child moved to a table adjacent to the large-group area and sat on top of the table. Ms. Wanda then closed the book and said, “Everyone move your chair to the table.” To which a child responded, “I want to hear the mud story.” Ms. Wanda told the child that they might try to read it again the following day, but that they would not read it right now.

Children attending Children's Corner under the direction of Ms. Wanda were neither, safe, engaged, nor cognitively stimulated. Ms. Wanda did not promote an environment conducive to oral language or vocabulary development, she did not focus children's attention to sound in words, she was unsuccessful in generating interest in books and reading, and she failed to provide opportunities for children to engage in writing or develop an understanding of print. Ms. Wanda's class did little to develop the language and literacy of children. Likely, most children in Ms. Wanda's class entered kindergarten with little concept of how a functional learning environment works. Further, unless they were introduced to literacy experiences in the home environment, they likely lacked familiarity with basic literacy concepts.

Healthy Tots

Lorinda, is a 13-year veteran in the child care and education profession. She holds a master's degree in education and serves as the director of Healthy Tots, a child care facility sponsored by the corporation controlling many of regional healthcare facilities including the local hospital. Lorinda acts as an advocate for the children under her care by securing corporate funding, facility management, and repairs from the parent company.

Since assuming the position of director at Healthy Tots a year-and-a-half ago, Lorinda has made improvements in the organization. Lorinda made scheduling changes and reorganized the grouping of children to reflect state-designated guidelines. Her actions resulted in the state-assigned quality rating improving from two-star to the highest three-star level. In addition to the informal observations that Lorinda conducts on a daily basis, she schedules quarterly formal observations for each teacher. Lorinda is one of the few leaders in this study that admitted to providing extra paid planning time for new teachers. Additionally, she works with each staff member to determine professional development needs. In recognition of the exceptional quality

of the care at Healthy Tots, the local state university requires all students in the early childhood bachelor's degree program to conduct observations at the facility.

Tori was the prekindergarten teacher at Healthy Tots. She holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and has eighteen years of experience working with young children. Tori created a classroom environment that promoted child exploration, imagination, and cooperation. Children had ample opportunities for free-choice within a well-managed framework.

Tori created a classroom that was both attractive and functional. Her large physical space was logically organized into areas focused on different aspects of development and learning. Tori optimized her resources and space, placing centers with joint skills and concepts in adjacent areas. All centers in Tori's classroom contained functional and logical literacy tools. For example, Tori placed books and children's magazines related to the theme of study, eggs, in the science center. Additionally, the aquarium with tadpoles had a note pad and pencil placed next to it allowing children to record observations.

In addition to creating a physical environment that promoted both content area learning and literacy development, Tori and her teaching assistant supported child discovery and intellectual stimulation through interactions and activities. Children in Tori's classroom were expected to write in their journals each day. Though each child chose an individual writing topic of interest, all children were expected to write their name, using the name card in the back of the journal for support, if necessary. When a child finished with the journal entry, the teacher or assistant captioned the picture if the child had not produced writing beyond a name. During the captioning, the teacher/assistant modeled by speaking each individual word while writing it.

Not only was the discourse climate in Tori's classroom favorable, but both she and her teaching assistant extended conversations through questions and provocative statements. During center time, the assistant rotated in and out of centers playing with and verbally interacting with children. While in the dramatic play area, the assistant engaged in imaginative play centered around a restaurant theme. She and three children read and ordered from menus while a fourth child wrote the order on paper.

Tori seamlessly carried the theme-of-study across learning areas and situations. In addition to integrating theme-related materials and books into all centers, Tori created experiences and opportunities for learning in her interactions with children. During a whole-group read-aloud, Tori introduced the children to both narrative and expository books focused on the theme. Further, Tori conducted the read-aloud in a dialogic manner, incorporating rich discussion in both the introduction and conclusion. While reading, she focused the children's attention on sophisticated vocabulary. Tori even managed to apply the theme to transitions, encouraging the children to name an animal that lays an egg before lining up for outdoor play.

Through hard work and planning by both Lorinda and Tori, children at Healthy Tots experienced rich learning environments with ample opportunities for literacy development and understanding to take place. With one exception, the language and literacy environment in Ms. Tori's class was outstanding. The single area of literacy that Tori did not focus on directly was phonemic awareness, though children did have opportunities to participate in rhyming activities and word play through songs and chants.

Child Exploratorium

Barbara serves as the director of the Child Exploratorium, a college campus-affiliated facility under the supervision of the Department of Human Development and Learning in the

College of Education. Barbara holds a master's degree in education, a TECTA director credential, and is regarded as a member of the faculty of the College of Education. She attends college-level faculty meetings, has university tenure requirements, and teaches child development courses. Further, she acts as a go-between for her teachers and university departments, particularly facilities management, and works to secure grants and funding for the Child Exploratorium.

In addition to serving as an administrator, Barbara serves as the instructional leader for the Child Exploratorium. She conducts regular observations of classroom teachers and works with staff individually to determine professional development needs. Barbara has taken part in only one literacy-focused professional development opportunity in the last two years, and she reported that she encounters no obstacles in facilitating the literacy development of children at the Child Exploratorium.

Jane and Linda team teach the younger prekindergarten class at the Child Exploratorium (some of the children were older three-year-olds and others were old enough to be eligible to attend kindergarten the next school year). Jane and Linda both have master's degrees in education and have been trained in the Reggio Emilia approach to learning. In accordance with Reggio Emilia methods, Jane and Linda encouraged children to focus on their thought processes and supported the children in their self-directed inquiries and discoveries. Documentation panels abounded on the walls of Jane and Linda's classroom providing children with visual reminders of their progress and interests over time.

Though the Reggio Emilia approach is conducive to developing literacy understandings and skills, neither reading nor writing seemed to be a primary focus for either teacher. Nevertheless, Jane and Linda incorporated aspects of literacy across units of study. Both Jane

and Linda expertly engaged children in conversation and masterfully extended children's thoughts through conversation. Further, unique vocabulary was introduced, highlighted, and deeply explored. For example, following the children's interest in space, they discussed in meaningful ways words such as gravity, satellite, and orbit. As previously mentioned, document panels hung throughout the classroom, and children and teachers reviewed them together. Thus, children saw literacy in the service of learning. Literacy was also intertwined into units of study in meaningful ways: in a focus on communities, children created maps of their neighborhoods. The maps were subsequently placed in the block area where photographs of each child's house and other community landmarks were attached to blocks.

Despite the superior focus on oral language and vocabulary, the reading and writing environments in Jane and Linda's classroom lacked richness. Books connected to the topic of study were placed in the book area; however, children did not use them. The children did not have access to writing materials outside of those located in the art center. Further, the classroom lacked evidence that children participated in any writing on a regular basis. A box contained children's journals, but only a handful of entries were present, the last one dated three months before the observation currently under review. When asked about a focus on phonemic awareness, Linda very defensively argued against the need for such instruction.

Anne Marie's class at the Child Exploratorium differed greatly from that of Jane and Linda. In contrast to the neatly organized and theme-focused classroom of Jane and Linda, Anne Marie's class evidenced lack of organization and procedures. Though children were greeted upon entering the classroom, very few subsequent interchanges between the teacher and individual children occurred.

Following arrival, the children gathered for large-group time. The teacher expertly pulled off a fluent read-aloud of a book that she grabbed from the shelf moments before. During the read-aloud she focused the children's attention on vocabulary and beginning sounds of words. Further, she re-visited the concept of slant rhyme in conjunction with the book. However, no other discussion about the content or theme of the book occurred.

Following the read-aloud, children had the option of going outside to play or eating a snack. Children who chose to eat a snack went outside immediately upon finishing their food. The teacher and the children remained on the playground for the rest of the morning. The teacher placed a blanket with books, most of grocery-store quality and poor condition, under an awning. Additionally, she put crayons and paper on a picnic table under the awning. Because several other classes were also on the playground, a number of adults supervised the children. The children played together, primarily on the playground equipment. The teachers stood together and talked about a host of topics including the children, but few interchanges between adults and children occurred outside of management talk (i.e. rules of the playground, treating each other kindly, etc.).

Within the same center, under the care of a single director, children's experiences varied greatly. Children in one classroom, with an adequate but not great language and literacy environment, had opportunities to interact with teachers and extend their thoughts and language. Children in the other classroom, with a poor language and literacy environment, were under the supervision of adults but had very little interaction with them or the tools necessary to develop literacy understandings.

Clement County Head Start

Sherry, the education coordinator for Clement County Head Start, has a bachelor's degree in education and 15 years of experience in early care and education. The teacher's under Sherry's charge are spread throughout the geographically large rural county. Sherry serves as an instructional leader conducting observations of each teacher twice-a-year, and working with each teacher to determine professional development needs. To facility the literacy practice in the classrooms under her direction, Sherry conducted a literacy workshop which she followed up with teacher mentoring.

Two Head Start classrooms under Sherry's domain were observed for this study. A third classroom observation was canceled after numerous re-schedulings due to a personal nature on the part of the teacher. Pamela is the lead teacher at Huntington Head Start. Pamela has a master's degree in education and 17 years of teaching experience. Janell, who has three years of teaching experience in public schools and a bachelor's degree in education, teaches at Vender's Gap Head Start. Both Pamela's and Janell's classrooms had outstanding general learning environments and quality literacy environments. The structure and morning schedules of the two classrooms were similar and included: breakfast, free-choice center time, and whole-group circle time.

The general learning environment in both classrooms encouraged independent exploration of concepts over time. Both classrooms were well organized with a bounty of materials, books, and attractive, child-sized furniture. Most centers in both classrooms contained books, and all centers in both classrooms had writing materials, which the children were observed using. The unit of study in both classrooms was insects, and the science centers in both classrooms had materials complimentary of this theme.

Children in both Ms. Pamela's and Ms. Janell's classrooms had ample opportunities to see, use, and create the written word. Environmental print abounded in both classrooms from commercially-made posters, to word walls, to class-generated graphs and charts. Not only did children see writing throughout the classroom, they had opportunities to create it independently and with teacher support. Two to three times each week, children posted a journal entry which consisted primarily of child created pictures and printed name with teacher captioning of the picture. Classroom created books were available alongside trade books for children to peruse in the book area. In Ms. Janell's class, the children even took part in a shared writing lesson.

Both Ms. Pamela and Ms. Janell had favorable discourse climates. All children in both classrooms were encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas. Though neither Ms. Pamela nor Ms. Janell did much to extend children's oral expression, both did make some efforts to engage children in conversation, and both made some effort to build the children's vocabulary. Both teachers also incorporated an explicit focus on sounds in words into daily routines. For example, in reviewing the calendar with children, Ms. Janell said, "That's right, /w/ /w/ /W/ednesday." Ms. Janell also focused children's attention on phonemes during her shared writing lesson, and Ms. Pamela played a game that encouraged children to identify objects beginning with the /p/ sound.

In addition to having climates conducive to general learning, both Ms. Pamela and Ms. Janell had orderly classrooms favorable to language and literacy learning. The only area of language and literacy development that lacked in these classrooms was a focus on vocabulary. Children understood behavioral expectations and followed through appropriately. The otherwise at-risk children should have entered kindergarten ready to begin formal reading instruction having been exposed to a full range of literary activity.

Raymondsville Elementary Preschool

Ms. Lyla serves as both the administrator and teacher of the Raymondsville Elementary School Prekindergarten program, a one-classroom preschool funded primarily by the state with support from the local school district. Ms. Lyla has a bachelor's degree and 24 years of experience teaching young children. In addition to the TECTA director credential, Ms. Lyla has taken part in more than five literacy-focused professional development offerings over the past two years. Ms. Lyla controls her own budget which she uses to purchase all items for her program including furniture, books, manipulatives, and consumable supplies. In the past, Ms. Lyla has pooled some funds with other programs in the school to make substantial purchases such as a covered outdoor pavilion.

Ms. Lyla's classroom was extremely attractive and very well organized. All centers had ample supplies and materials. Additionally, each center had related books and writing materials. For example, in the block center near carpenter tools were the books, *How a House Is Built* (Gibbons, 1996) and *Building a House* (Barton, 1990). A writing station, which was in addition to an art center, was designed to look like an office area with special paper, pencils, markers, paper clips, tape, etc. In addition to a designated book area with comfortable seating, books on tape, and a wide variety of displayed books including class-created books, was a classroom library with books arranged by topic.

For large-group reading, Ms. Lyla worked with half of the class (10 students) while the assistant took half of the class for gross motor play outside, she stated that during inclement weather she takes the children to the gym. Ms. Lyla had the children listen to an audio book while she followed along in a written book on an easel using a pointer. Following the reading of the book, the children discussed the story with Ms. Lyla. During the discussion, Ms. Lyla wrote

words on a white board with children taking part in identifying the appropriate letters. Because Ms. Lyla chose some irregular words to write, like dough, the lesson may have caused some confusion for the children. During the discussion, Ms. Lyla asked the children to identify some rhyming words in the story and also focused their attention on individual sounds in words. Finally, Ms. Lyla allowed each child to choose a character and supported the children in a reenactment of the story.

The discourse climate in Mrs. Lyla's classroom was favorable and the children understood teacher expectations in terms of behavior. When conflicts did arise, Ms. Lyla encouraged the children to come to a solution. Though neither Ms. Lyla nor her assistant worked to extend children's conversations, they both interacted informally with the children during breakfast and outdoor play.

Though writing journals were sent home following parent conferences the previous week, Ms. Lyla stated that the children wrote daily. Further, much of the child-created work had been removed from the walls and bulletin boards, though again, Ms. Lyla stated that children did do much creative art in conjunction with book reading. Class-created books found in the book area did support these claims.

Children in Ms. Lyla's classroom had ample opportunities to interact with literacy-related tools and had access to numerous books. Though some of the literacy interactions during the formal book reading were far beyond the abilities of the children, focus on concepts of print, letter names, and sounds in words were incorporated into the lesson. Efforts to build vocabulary were lacking; however, Ms. Lyla and her assistant supported all other areas of literacy development, providing experiences with literacy across a variety of activities and situations and holding high expectations for learning and behavior.

*Findings***Books and Book Reading**

Teachers differed greatly in their use of books. All of the classrooms had a distinct book area; however, the quality of the book areas differed greatly in terms of organization; number of books; and quality, condition, and variety of books by genre and/or text difficulty available. Additionally, all but one classroom had a formal book reading session, again the quality of the reading and surrounding discussion varied across classrooms.

Writing and Print

Support for print and early writing was weak in all but four of the classrooms observed for this study. The four teachers who had good practices and environments in place in terms of writing were strong in all three sub-areas of print and writing. Of the remaining seven classrooms, one was average overall and the other six were weak in all areas with two exceptions. One classroom teacher made good use of environmental print, and another teacher had average support for children's writing.

Oral Language and Vocabulary

The observed classrooms showed great differences in language environments. Though most of the teachers promoted a very positive discourse climate, children in other classrooms did not have the freedom to express their ideas and opinions. Further, some of the teachers would extend children's conversations using a variety of techniques, some primarily through the use of questions, and still others made no attempts to extend conversations at all. Though some teachers made efforts to build vocabulary, this area of literacy development did not seem to be a priority in any of the classrooms.

Decoding Knowledge

Teachers' practice in the area of code-related skills was consistent with leaders' beliefs in regard to decoding. The public school prekindergarten and the two Head Start classrooms had a number of phonological awareness opportunities; two other teachers used direct measures to draw children's attention to the sounds in words. The remaining teachers either had no phonological awareness focus at all or such opportunities were limited to the use of songs and rhymes.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the literacy beliefs and instructional leadership behaviors of directors of child care facilities and to investigate whether instructional leaders' beliefs were related to teachers' instructional practices in the areas of language development, reading, and writing.

Survey data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine instructional leaders developmental literacy beliefs and leadership behaviors.

Observational data were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods. Observational data reported on the ELLCO were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Observational data recorded in running field notes were analyzed to determine trends within classrooms and across facilities.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusions

This paper investigated the developmental literacy beliefs of instructional leaders of child care facilities. Specifically, this study examined the literacy beliefs and the leadership behaviors of the instructional leaders of child care facilities and investigated whether these characteristics and/or behaviors were related to prekindergarten teachers' instructional practices in the areas of language development, reading, and writing. Due to the dearth of research in this area, the current study presents important findings as well as implications for both policy and practice.

The developmental literacy beliefs of instructional leaders of child care facilities

Book Reading

Instructional leaders' beliefs are most consistent with best practice in the area of book reading. Nearly all (95%) of the instructional leaders completing the survey recognized the importance of children's exposure to books and reading both independently and in read-aloud settings. Similarly, there was strong consensus concerning the importance of conversation and discussion surrounding the reading of books. Even in areas of book reading which research has shown to be less common place in early childhood settings like repeated readings of books, and vocabulary development in conjunction with read-alouds (Hawken, Johnston, McDonnell, 2005), over 75% of the respondents indicated agreement with these practices.

Given the tremendous emphasis placed on books and book reading, this finding should be expected. In taking a position on developmentally appropriate literacy practice for young children, the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children pointed to reading aloud as "the single most important activity" (Neuman, Copple, Bredekamp, 2000, p. 3) for developing literacy skills. Additionally, information

concerning the benefits of providing children access to both narrative and expository books (McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, & Brooks, 1999; Neuman, 1999; Neuman, Celano, Greco, & Shue, 2001; Stone & Twardosz, 2001; Pappas, 1991a) and classroom environmental designs (Morrow, 1982, 1990; Morrow & Weinstein, 1982, 1986) to promote reading have proliferated over the course of the past two decades.

Research has investigated and widely disseminated information about group book reading practices including differences in reading styles, group size, and book selection (Dickinson & Keebler, 1989; Feitelson, Goldstein, Iraqi, & Share, 1993; Hargrave & Senechal, 2000; Justice & Pullen, 2003; Martinez & Teale, 1993; McKeown & Beck, 2005; Morrow, 1989; Morrow, O'Connor, & Smith, 1990; Morrow & Smith, 1990; Phillips & Twardosz, 1999; Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Strickland & Morrow, 1989; Teale, 2003; Temple & Snow, 2003). Finally, book reading has received much attention in the professional development of child care personnel for over a decade (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Whitehurst, et. al., 1994).

Writing

Instructional leaders' beliefs in the area of writing were also closely aligned with best practice. Nearly all of the respondents recognized the utility of using a child's name in the service of writing instruction, as well as the importance of allowing children to write without worrying about conventional spelling or letter formation. Further, more than 80% of the instructional leaders acknowledged that watching teachers write contributes to children's writing ability. However, responses indicate that the majority of instructional leaders do not recognize that reading ability and writing skills develop in tandem. An important insight if children's literacy development is to be maximized in the preschool setting.

Clay (1975) explains that writing focuses a child's attention on the details of print. "Writing allows children to explore their current hypotheses about print and thus change or solidify their understanding" (Bloodgood, 1999, p. 346). As children experiment with writing, they begin to grasp the connection between spoken word and written language. Further, because reading and writing require the same type of thought processes, strengthening an individual's ability in one will affect the other (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000). Equally important, however, are the cognitive processes that reading and writing both provoke. Children who are able to read and write, are able to think at a more complex level, "written language learning is inevitably a part of learning about social and ideological worlds and about the place of a child's own relationships and experiences in those worlds" (Dyson, 2001, p. 138). Further, allowing children opportunities to write bolsters phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, letter knowledge and word writing abilities (Aram & Biron, 2004).

In comparison to reading, writing has not received great focus in the early childhood literature. Even highly regarded research literature sometimes neglects the role of writing in early literacy development. Take for example *The Handbook of Early Literacy Research, Volume 2* (Dickinson & Neuman, 2006), writing is given mention in a number of chapters, but no chapter is devoted exclusively to early writing. Further, writing is not a focus skill for programs receiving funding through Early Reading First (U. S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Oral Language and Vocabulary

Oral language and vocabulary development was an area where overall results showed relatively close alignment between instructional leaders' beliefs and best practice. Responses from a vast majority of the participants of the study indicate practitioners' understanding of the need for children to converse over meals and throughout the day about their ideas and feelings.

Further, the instructional leaders seem to have an understanding of the contributions that such conversations will make to the vocabulary acquisition of the children. These findings are not surprising given their compatibility with traditionally held beliefs concerning developmentally appropriate practice (NAEYC, 2009; New, 2001).

Responses to the two statements concerning the connection between vocabulary knowledge and reading ability indicate that less than half of the respondents have an understanding of this relationship. “Not only are oral language abilities linked to the code-related skills that promote word-reading abilities, but early oral language abilities also provide the foundation for development of the advanced oral language skills necessary for successful comprehension in more skilled readers” (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002, p. 944). Thus in addition to contributing to a child’s phonological sensitivity (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001) and lexical restructuring abilities (Goswami, 2001), well developed vocabularies also contribute to later reading comprehension abilities (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982). Additionally, a large vocabulary early in life has a prolific effect, facilitating the addition of new words (Penno, Moore, & Wilkinson, 2002; Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Stanovich, 1986; McKeown, 1985); thereby further boosting reading abilities.

The call for inclusion of vocabulary-building activities in the early childhood years has intensified over the past decade as more research supports its importance. Scarborough (2001) suggests that in a number of cases, children who are thought to have reading comprehension problems actually have “oral language limitations” (p. 98). In *Beginning Literacy with Language* (2001), Dickinson and Tabors addressed the need for children to hear rare words in the preschool setting. Biemiller (2009) contends that educators are obligated to further develop children’s vocabulary as about 70% of all word meanings are derived with assistance from

another. Further, he continues the argument that it is particularly important for teachers of very young children to provide word meanings during oral readings because the children are not at liberty to contemplate the meanings on their own, as might be the case if they were able to read independently.

Decoding Knowledge

Both the overall construct scores and responses to individual items in the area of decoding knowledge point to the gap between instructional leaders' beliefs and research concerning best practice. On four of the nine code-related items, over one-half of the instructional leaders either had no opinion about or disagreed with best practice, an indication that more professional development is needed in this area.

Those items that dealt specifically with code-related skills which require direct instruction showed the greatest degree of disagreement between the professionals' beliefs and research findings. Perhaps based in part upon the murky wording of the belief statements, instructional leaders had some inconsistencies in their beliefs concerning letter-name knowledge. However, results make it clear that the leaders either did not have an understanding of the relationship between letter-name knowledge and reading proficiency, or perhaps, they were not committed to advancing those insights during the preschool years. Findings were similar concerning leaders' beliefs in the area of letter-sound knowledge. In addition to disagreement in the areas of letter-name and letter sound knowledge, a large number of instructional leaders disagreed with the belief that children should be able to identify the beginning and ending sounds in words. Surprisingly, given the historical view of developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1987), over one-third of those surveyed thought children could learn to identify beginning and ending sounds in words by circling pictures of things that rhyme on worksheets.

Schickedanz (2003) provides insight into the discrepancy between essential early literacy skills and the willingness of early childhood professionals to address them. Schickedanz claims that many teachers lack information about the necessity for certain literacy understandings to be taught rather than discovered. Yet despite the need for an adult to act as a go-between, many early childhood professionals hesitate to explicitly or directly instruct preschoolers. Schickedanz suggests that this reluctance is due to the fact that many teachers do not realize that direct instruction does not have to be formal instruction—that children can be given insights into letter-name knowledge, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound associations through playful, developmentally appropriate interactions.

Regardless of the ability to teach code-related skills in a developmentally appropriate fashion (Murray, Stahl, & Ivey, 1996; Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000), preschool teachers are not likely to do so. Dickinson and Caswell (2007) reported the reluctance on the part of Head Start teachers to teach essential literacy skills, “a number of participants commented to instructors that they had been discouraged from teaching literacy-related skills” (p. 256). Other research (Hawken, Johnston, & McDonnell, 2005; Powell, Diamond, Bojczyk, & Gerde, 2008) has also shown that preschool teachers are more likely to create an environment that promotes child interaction with literacy-related material rather than engage children in direct instruction. In fact, in her study of preschool teachers’ views of themselves as literacy educators, Shedd (in press) found that “even though all teachers indicated some awareness that there were skills to be acquired, most of the teachers did not seem to believe that they need to be taught, but rather felt that children would acquire development of the necessary skills through activities in the classroom.”

Interestingly, it is the very skills that early childhood educators hesitate to teach that are most predictive of early reading achievement (Adams, 1990; Kirby, Parrila, & Pfeiffer, 2003; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Because phonological awareness has been shown to be such a strong predictor of future reading success, preschool programs should include phonological training using letter knowledge (Scarborough, 2001). Yet, as has already been discussed, phonological skills, require teacher-child interaction (Justice & Pollen, 2003), and are best taught through segmentation and blending activities (Yeh, 2003) as opposed to the more common method of using rhyming and alliteration activities (Hawken, Johnston, & McDonnell, 2005).

What are the instructional leadership behaviors of early childhood educational leaders?

Despite the previously mentioned ample research linking quality of early childhood classrooms with teacher education, nearly half of all instructional leaders in this study reported that they were willing to hire a lead teacher with only a high school diploma. Though previous studies also show discrepancy regarding years of experience and quality (Bryant et. al., 1994; Connor, Son, Hindman, & Morrison, 2005; Cryer et. al., 1999; Dunn, 1993; Laparo, Sexton, & Snyder, 1998; LoCasale-Crouch et. al., 2007), a majority of leaders in this study reported a minimum requirement of at least one year of experience in early care or education for individuals hired for lead teacher positions.

In addition to reporting priority differences in hiring practices, instructional leaders also reported differences in the level of support they provide for staff, both new and returning, an area that research (Howes, et. al., 2003) points to as important to child care quality. More than one-third of all leaders reported that they do not assign an experienced mentor for new teachers, yet such a provision shows benefits for the mentee, the mentor, and the school or facility (Hobson,

Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). Additionally, less than 40% of the instructional leaders in this study reported that they work with teachers individually to determine professional development needs, though such practice has been shown to be effective for improving reading practice (Dickinson & Caswell, 2007; Ladson-Billings & Gomez, 2001; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005).

Differences in Beliefs and Leadership Behaviors in Terms of Leaders' Characteristics

Differences in the developmental literacy beliefs and leadership behaviors were seen according to the leaders' own formal education, experience and participation in literacy-focused professional development. That leaders' formal education and participation in literacy-focused professional development are related to their development literacy beliefs is a finding consistent with other research which also shows relationships between child caregivers' education level and their quality of care for children (Arnett, 1989; Berk, 1985; Loeb, Fuller, Kagan, & Carrol, 2004; McMullen & Alat, 2002; Phillips et al., 2000; Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997;). It also is compatible with research supporting the contributions of professional development to classroom quality (Arnett, 1989; Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002; Epstein, 1999). More specifically, it supports previous findings indicating that professional development makes a difference in the quality of teachers' literacy instruction (Justice, Mashburn, Hamre & Pianta, 2008; McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, & Brooks, 1999; Pikulski, 1994).

Leaders' years of experience (Helburn, et. al., 1995) and participation in professional development (Jorde-Bloom & Sheerer, 1992) have been shown to affect quality of care. However, this study suggests that the level of formal education of instructional leaders is also an important factor in their leadership behaviors. Data from this study indicate that leaders' hiring practices are affected by their own educational level. Hence, if the quality of classroom

instruction is improved with more highly educated teachers as the previously cited research indicates, then it is important to have leaders in place who are more likely to hire those teachers.

This study also showed differences in leadership behavior according to leaders' years of experience in early care and education and according to the number of literacy-focused professional development opportunities in which they had participated over the course of the previous two years. Both leaders' years of experience and participation in literacy-focused professional development were related to their likelihood of enacting leadership behaviors previously linked to quality of care (Howes, et. al., 2003); however, some caution should be used in interpreting these results given that the numbers represented in some of the categories were less than 10 percent of the total sample.

Is there a relationship between instructional leaders' developmental literacy beliefs and the instructional practices of teachers of prekindergarten classes?

The descriptions of the instructional leaders' characteristics, roles and beliefs paired with the observations of teachers provide some insights into possible relationships, but also propagate further questions. Facilities were selected based upon a high leader TBQ score in anticipation that leader beliefs congruent with research based findings in the area of developmental literacy knowledge would translate into high quality classroom practice both overall and in the areas of reading writing and language development. However, observations revealed great variability in classroom practice in terms of instructional support, classroom design, teacher-child interactions, and interactions between children.

Comparison of leader traits with teacher practice would be expected to reveal some trends in terms of leader affect on classroom practice, however, the nature of the data in this study make such comparisons difficult. Because facilities were selected based upon a high

leader TBQ score, it is reasonable to conclude that all leaders in this portion of the study held beliefs fairly consistent with research-based findings concerning literacy development and practice. Hence, it is hard to draw conclusion based on leader knowledge. Leaders in this phase of the study were also well-seasoned in terms of experience, all having over 10 years of experience in the care and education of young children, again making it difficult to speculate about relationships to teachers' practice.

In terms of education, leaders in this phase of the study differed markedly: some had only a CDA while others had formal education beyond a master's degree. Nevertheless, it is difficult to draw conclusions about classroom practice based on leader education. The two instructional leaders with the least amount of formal instruction supervised teachers with some of the most ineffective literacy practices; however, the teachers also had low levels of formal education. Further, one of the leaders had been in her position for less than two years, a factor that should be considered in assessing her effectiveness (Heck, 1992). Finally, the two leaders with the highest levels of formal education supervised teachers whose practice varied considerably in terms of quality.

Both the descriptive statistics and qualitative descriptions of the teachers, classrooms, and practice show great variability both across and within centers. Classrooms under the same leader sometimes were very similar in quality of instruction: take for example classrooms at The Shepherd's Flock and the Head Start classrooms. All classrooms at The Shepherd's Flock showed outstanding teacher affect, good general classroom quality, and mediocre quality literacy opportunities. Similarly, both Head Start classrooms had teachers with good affect, outstanding general classroom quality, and good literacy environments and interactions. In other centers, classrooms differed markedly. At the Child Exploratorium, one classroom had good teacher

affect, great general classroom quality, but was mediocre in terms of literacy, while a second classroom was of poor quality overall.

Additionally, leaders' beliefs did not always translate into teachers' practice. All of the leaders in phase two of the study held beliefs completely consistent with research in developmental literacy and practice in the area of book reading; however, some teachers scores on the Books and Book Reading section of the ELLCO did not reflect best practice: scores ranged from 7 to 25 (with possible scores from 4 to 25). This finding is inconsistent with previous research indicating that principals' beliefs are reflected in kindergarten teachers' practice (Bryant, Clifford & Peisner, 1991). However, previous research investigating the relationship between teacher-reported beliefs and teaching behaviors has shown conflicting findings (McMullen et. al, 1996).

Implications

Results from this study suggest the need for changes in practice in the early childhood setting. Such changes can only be realized through improvements in the knowledge base and instructional strategies of professionals responsible for the levels of quality in early care and education. Hence, this study supports the need for further professional development of early childhood professionals. Additionally, findings from this study support the need for changes in policy both in terms of governmental regulation and professional organization priorities. Finally, this study further reveals the disparity in knowledge concerning contributions to quality in the early childhood setting. Thus, this study points to the need for further research.

Professional Development

The lack of congruence between leader beliefs and research-based findings concerning literacy development and practice in this study and others (i.e., Duke, et. al., 2006; Hawken, et.

al., 2005) points to the need for more professional development focused on developmental literacy. Despite the positive findings regarding leaders' beliefs in the area of books and book reading in phase one of this study, observational data in phase two show that children's access to books and reading in a number of child care classrooms is limited. Thus, the great quantities of literature concerning the importance of books and book reading seem to have affected beliefs but have not improved practice. Both belief data and observational data also point to the need for more focused attention on vocabulary development, phonemic awareness, and support for print and writing.

Researchers studying instructional improvement in the early childhood context have drawn some important conclusions regarding effectiveness. Professional development paired with ongoing coaching or support seems to have an even greater impact on the quality of literacy instruction than stand-alone training (Dickinson & Caswell, 2007; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006). Leaders with strong and deep knowledge can deliver this coaching in both a cost-effective manner and based upon the continuing and changing needs of teachers. Thus, the need for leaders with strong literacy knowledge is even more pronounced when seen in this light. Other key features of professional development that improve the quality of instruction in education include self-evaluation of professional development needs (Dickinson & Caswell, 2007; Ladson-Billings & Gomez, 2001), and support from administrators (Dickinson & Caswell, 2007), both of which are factors hinging on the priorities and knowledge of instructional leaders.

Policy

This study points to the need for changes in policy in the early childhood setting. Specifically, findings from this study point to the need for higher standards for early childhood

educators along with compensation that is fair and competitive. Additionally, this study alludes to the need for stronger relationships between existing education-related public organizations and professionals in the early care and education industry. Finally, this study signals the need for stronger action on the part of professional organizations aimed at supporting and informing early childhood professionals.

Minimum Standards

Findings from this study suggest that leaders' level of education impacts both beliefs and leadership behaviors. Paired with findings from previous research showing links between quality and level of teacher education, this study points to the need for higher minimum requirements for early childhood teachers and leaders. Currently, the state of Tennessee is ranked 3rd in the nation in terms of state child care licensing regulations and oversight (NACCRRRA, 2009), yet the minimum requirements for teachers and leaders of young children in center care are paltry compared to those of elementary school personnel. In terms of education, Tennessee requires only a high school diploma with an additional 30 clock hours of training through TECTA for directors of child care facilities (Tennessee Department of Human Services Adult and Family Services Division, 2006) conversely, principals of elementary schools must hold a graduate degree in school administration (Tennessee Department of Education, n.d.). Additionally, most state-funded prekindergarten programs, as well as Head Start, have lower minimum education requirements for prekindergarten teachers than they have kindergarten teachers (Barnett, 2004).

Compensation

In addition to the discrepancy in educational requirements between professionals in the preschool setting and teachers of elementary schools, there is great disparity in the compensation granted the two groups. The median salary for teachers at the kindergarten level and beyond ranges between \$43,600 and \$48,700; whereas, the median salary for prekindergarten teachers is \$22,700 (United States Department of Labor, 2008). Previous research suggests links between teacher compensation and classroom quality (Helburn et. al., 1995; Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997; Scarr, Eisenberg, & Deter-Deckard, 1994); thus, one method for increasing quality of care is to increase the wages of child care personnel. Further, increases in wages should result in higher rates of retention (Barnett, 2003b), again increasing the quality of care (Helburn, et. al., 1995).

Collaboration

Observational data from this study show that children's access to books and literacy materials was quite limited in a number of child care classrooms. Though the cost of books and other literacy materials can impact teachers' ability to purchase such supplies, it should not interfere with children's access to such resources.

In addition to supplying necessary resources to child care facilities, public libraries and public schools can facilitate the professional development of early childhood professionals. The Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children, both of which are divisions within the American Library Association have partnered to develop a program targeted at raising the developmental literacy knowledge base of early childhood professionals and parents (Myers & Henderson, 2007). Other public library programs aimed at boosting young

children's literacy development (Bagley, 2000; Broderick, 2003; Smuda, 2002) provide models for preschool-library collaboration. Public schools are also able to support the developmental knowledge of the early care and education community through outreach programs and professional development offerings (Braxton, 2004; Cahill, 2004).

Reconceptualization of Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Finally, despite the continued call for re-conceptualization of developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1997; McGill-Franzen, 1992; Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 1998), early child care personnel in this study as well as other studies neglect to address the developmental literacy needs of children through effective instruction. This phenomenon is similar to the change process that continues to take place in the elementary school environment, which Baumann and colleagues have referred to as “evolutionary rather than revolutionary” (Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, and Ro, 2000, p. 31). To help make this change more revolutionary, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) needs to take a stronger stance in its’ endorsement of direct instruction. In the latest document concerning developmentally appropriate practice, NAEYC (2009) acknowledged the need for children to have decoding skills, however, they failed to explicitly state that teachers need to be involved in teaching such skills to children. Perhaps following a direct nod from NAEYC, early childhood educators will revise their thinking on developmentally appropriate instruction. Along with reconceptualized frameworks guiding their thoughts on literacy practice, child care personnel need opportunities to witness effective literacy instruction in practice. Such demonstrations will provide occasion to see quality learning through developmentally appropriate interactions and teaching which might in turn spur further changes.

Research

The variability, in terms of literacy experiences, found in the classrooms in this study is similar to that reported in other research (Burchinal, et. al., 2000; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Duke, et. al., 2006; Green, Peterson, & Lewis, 2006; Justice, et. al, 2008; McGill-Franzen, Lanford, & Adams, 2002). Though a number of studies have traced the effects of teacher education to general classroom quality, few have focused exclusively on literacy in the classroom. Dickinson (2002) has argued that the research tools most widely used in judging quality in the early childhood setting give cursory attention to literacy environments and processes. Thus, very little is known about the relationship of teacher, leader, or classroom variables and the quality of literacy experiences and opportunities available to children in classrooms.

Given the importance of early literacy experiences, more study needs to be conducted looking at the variables affecting classroom literacy practice. Further research investigating contributions to classroom literacy practice should be conducted using both quantitative and qualitative designs. Large-scale quantitative studies investigating the literacy beliefs of teachers and leaders would further delineate the contribution of beliefs to classroom literacy practice. Small, in-depth qualitative studies focusing on facilities with quality literacy environments and instructional supports might illuminate factors not yet considered in existing research.

In addition to the need for more research investigating early childhood literacy, additional tools are needed to evaluate literacy beliefs and knowledge. Currently, few measures of developmental literacy knowledge aimed at assessing early childhood educators have been published.

The Teacher's Knowledge Assessment Survey (TKAS) (Cunningham, Davidson & Zibulsky, 2007 as reported in Cunningham, 2009) was developed to assess preschool teachers' knowledge of language structures and instructional practices related to these structures. Cunningham developed the TKAS through modification of Moats' (1994) measure of teacher knowledge. Though the TKAS was developed for assessment of early childhood professionals, the instrument has a singular focus on word structures and sounds; thus it does not accurately reflect total developmental literacy knowledge.

The Preschool Teacher Literacy Beliefs Questionnaire used in this study was more comprehensive in its focus on developmental literacy knowledge. Additionally, the TBQ was developed specifically for the early childcare population. Though Hindman and Wasik (in press) reported the instrument to be both valid and reliable, Chronbach alphas testing the reliability of the instrument using data from this study suggest that the instrument needs revisions.

Knowledge of the developmental literacy beliefs of early childhood professionals can be used to guide professional development needs and contribute to research exploring contributions to quality preschools. Given the shortcomings of existing instruments measuring developmental literacy knowledge and beliefs, information about the developmental literacy beliefs of early childhood teachers and leaders are difficult to quantify. Development of new measures, or revision of existing instruments, is necessary for elucidating information about literacy beliefs.

Limitations

Though the TBQ, used in this study to measure instructional leaders' literacy beliefs, has been previously validated (Hindman & Wasik, in press), responses to items in each of the constructs were not as expected. In conducting Chronbach reliability alphas using data from this study, results differed greatly from those reported by Hindman and Wasik. Given the great

variation within the constructs, revision of the TBQ might be in order. Thus, results from this study should be interpreted with caution.

This study did not address instructional leaders' view of the primary goal of preschool, either social preparation, academic preparation, or some combination of the two. Dickinson (2001) found this be an important factor in the quality of the early childhood learning environment. Similarly, Powell and colleagues (2008) have found disparities in teachers' views of literacy learning in relation to learning in other developmental domains.

While results may be generalized concerning any associations between instructional leaders' characteristics and beliefs and pre-kindergarten classroom literacy instruction within certain counties in the state of Tennessee, generalizations to preschool instruction in other states and counties should be made with caution. Finally, given that the results of this study are correlation, caution should be used in interpreting cause.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Tables

Table 1
Participation by Facility Type

Type of Facility	Number of Facilities Represented	Total Number of Facilities Eligible to Participate	Percentage of Facilities Represented
Public Elementary Preschool	39	48	81.25
Private/Parochial Elementary Preschool	5	9	55.55
Private Child Care	38	58	65.51
Head Start	24	24	100
Church-affiliated Child Care	27	33	81.81
Corporate Sponsored	3	3	100
Chain	2	2	100
Community/Non-Profit Organization	3	5	60.00
College Campus Sponsored	2	2	100
Public Elementary School-Head Start Cooperative	25	25	100
Total	168	209	80.38

Table 2
Phase II Instructional Leaders Experience and Education

Facility Type	Highest Degree	Years of Experience in Child Care and Education	Number of Literacy-Focused Professional Development in Last 2 Years	TBQ Score
Public School PreK	B.S.	24	5+	131
Private Child Care	CDA	18	1	139
Head Start	B.S.	15	4-5	135
Religious-affiliated Child Care	B.S.	18	4-5	130
Corporate Sponsored Child Care	M. Ed.	13	4-5	135
National Franchise Child Care	CDA	13	2-3	136
College Campus Child Care	M. Ed.	23	1	132

Table 3
Phase II lead teachers experience and education

Facility Type	Highest Degree	Years Experience in Child Care and Education
Public School PreK	B.S.	24
Privately Owned Child Care	CDA	5
Religious-affiliated Child Care	B.S.	18
Religious-affiliated Child Care	B.S.	20
Religious-affiliated Child Care	B.S.	20
Head Start	M. Ed	17
Head Start	B.S.	4
Corporate Sponsored Child Care	B.S.	18
National Franchise Child Care	CDA	32
College Campus Child Care	M. Ed.	
College Campus Child Care	B.S.	

Table 4
Average TBQ Construct and Total Scores

	Mean	S.D.	Range
Book Reading	4.38	.47	2.20-5.00
Writing	4.11	.48	3.00-5.00
Oral Language and Vocabulary	4.18	.40	3.22-4.89
Decoding Knowledge	3.58	.38	2.78-4.56
Total Beliefs	3.98	.33	3.03-4.63

Table 5
Percent of Instructional Leaders Agreement with TBQ Items

TBQ Item	Percent in agreement (disagreement for reverse-code items)
READING CONSTRUCT	
Preschool children should not ask questions or talk about stories when teachers read to them*	97.2
Preschool children should look at books to help them learn to read	95.3
Preschool children do not need to hear many stories in order to become good readers*	95.3
Preschool children learn new words as teachers define them when reading books to children	84.0
Preschool children need to hear the same story more than once or twice to learn new words	81.1
WRITING CONSTRUCT	
Preschool children should not waste time scribbling and drawing when they can be learning to write*	97.2
Preschool children can be taught letter names as they write their names	92.5
Preschool children should not write until teachers show them how to form each letter*	84.9
Preschool children should write without worrying about conventional spelling	82.1
Preschool children learn to write in part by watching teachers write	81.1
Preschool children learn to read before learning to write*	39.68
ORAL LANGUAGE AND VOCABULARY CONSTRUCT	
Preschool children should not talk with each other during the day*	100
Preschool children learn new words by connecting them to real things, objects, or activities they are doing	99.1

Preschool children learn language by talking about their ideas and expressing their feelings	97.2
Preschool children should not talk during meal times*	97.2
Preschool children should learn new words by talking with teachers about what they are doing at the time	91.5
Preschool children need many experiences, such as going to the zoo and talking about it in order to learn new vocabulary	84.0
Preschool children do not need to learn the meaning of a lot of words to become good readers*	67.00
Preschool children need to learn a lot of words so they can learn to read	47.17
Preschool children should be taught to speak in complete sentences	44.34
CODE CONSTRUCT	
Preschool children should play with words, such as making up rhymes or jump rope chants, to learn to hear ending sounds in words	89.6
Preschool children do not need to be taught the names of each letter because children can learn to read without knowing each letter and its name*	81.2
Preschool children learn ending sounds in words by listening to nursery rhymes	74.5
Preschool children learn ending sounds by circling pictures of things that rhyme on worksheets*	61.3
Preschool children should learn to identify beginning and ending sounds in words	59.43
Preschool children need plenty of drill and practice to learn the sounds of letters*	49.06
Preschool children need to be taught the names of each letter so they will be good readers	46.28
Preschool children should be taught to hear sounds in their	46.23

environment before they are taught to hear sounds in words

Preschool children learn letter names by singing the ABC song* 37.7

OTHER

Preschool children need to learn to sit still and listen to teachers 33.96

*item reverse-coded

Table 6
Chronbach Alpha Data

		Hindman & Wasik Study		Current Study
Book Reading (5 items)	M=4.27, SD=.53	.73	M=4.38, SD=.47	.58
Writing (6 items)	M=3.98, SD=.58	.60	M=4.11, SD=.48	.58
Oral Language (9 items)	M=4.25, SD=.45	.72	M=4.18, SD=.40	.60
Decoding Knowledge (9 items)	M=3.61, SD=.49	.67	M=3.58, SD=.38	.27
TBQ Overall (30 items)	M=118.32, SD=12.48	.87	M=119.29, SD=9.81	.79

Table 7
Instructional Leaders Literacy-Focused Professional Development by Education

		High School Only	Special Training and/or Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Total
Literacy-focused	0	2	0	5	7
Professional	1	2	5	3	10
Development over the	2-3	7	16	26	49
Past 2 Years	4-5	0	2	17	19
	more than 5	1	9	13	23
Total		12	32	64	108

Table 8
 Instructional Leaders Literacy-Focused Professional Development by Experience
 Years of Experience

		Years of Experience			Total
		Less than 5	5-10	Over 10	
Literacy-focused Professional Development over the Past 2 Years	0	2	1	4	7
	1	0	2	8	10
	2-3	1	11	37	49
	4-5	0	1	18	19
	more than 5	0	3	20	23
Total		3	18	87	108

Table 9
Associations between Leaders' Education and Literacy Beliefs

	High School Only	Additional Training and/or Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher	$F(2, 103)$
Total beliefs	M=108.83, SD=7.98	M=122.44, SD=9.77	M=199.69, SD=8.87	9.98, $p<.001$
Reading	M=20.58, SD=1.44	M=22.72, SD=2.43	M=21.74, SD=2.34	4.18, $p=.018$
Writing	M=21.75, SD=1.86	M=25.09, SD=2.70	M=24.95, SD=2.85	7.63, $p=.001$
Oral Language	M=35.00, SD=3.88	M=38.38, SD=3.53	M=37.81, SD=3.33	4.31, $p=.016$
Code	M=28.67, SD=2.90	M=33.53, SD=3.56	M=32.16, SD=2.95	10.44, $p<.001$

Table 10

Association between Leaders' Literacy-Focused Professional Development and Literacy Beliefs

	Number of Literacy-Focused PD Courses					<i>F</i> (4, 105)	Tukey post-hoc
	0	1	2-3	4-5	5+		
N	6	10	49	18	23		
Total beliefs	M=104.67, SD=9.20	M=120.60, SD=11.95	M=117.65, SD=8.52	M=123.06, SD=8.10	M=123.09, SD=8.97	6.31**	0 ≠ any amount of PD
Reading	M=18.17, SD=3.66	M=22.10, SD=3.41	M=21.73, SD=1.74	M=22.50, SD=2.18	M=22.69, SD=1.89	5.64**	0 ≠ any amount of PD
Writing	M=22.17, SD=3.60	M=24.60, SD=3.47	M=24.02, SD=2.55	M=26.11, SD=2.72	M=25.43, SD=2.66	3.56*	0 ≠ 4-5;
Oral language	M=33.33, SD=2.58	M=37.80, SD=3.58	M=37.31, SD=3.40	M=38.33, SD=3.27	M=38.96, SD=3.56	3.59*	0 ≠ 4-5; more than 5
Code	M=27.67, SD=1.86	M=33.10, SD=2.60	M=31.67, SD=33.56	M=33.56, SD=3.18	M=32.96, SD=3.61	4.67*	0 ≠ any amount of PD

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$

Table 11
Formal Observations of Staff/Teachers

	Frequency	Percent
No formal observations	9	8.3
1 time each year	14	13.0
2 times a year	29	26.9
3 times a year	19	17.6
4 times a year	7	6.5
More than 4 times a year	30	27.8
Total	108	100.0

Table 12
Professional Development Decision Making

	Frequency	Percent
Currently there is no plan for professional development	2	1.9
All staff receive the same professional development arranged by the director	10	9.2
Staff choose their own professional development from a limited number of choices arranged by the director	20	18.5
Staff choose their own professional development	26	24.1
The director works with each staff member individually to determine professional development needs	43	39.8
Other	7	6.5

Table 13
Allocation of Materials according to Leaders' Formal Education

		How do you ensure that your teachers have the materials necessary to meet their classroom instructional needs?				Total
		Teachers are given a basic inventory of supplies	Teachers are given a basic inventory of supplies and make requests for additional materials	Teachers are given a budget to purchase their own supplies	Other	
Education	High School Only	1	11	0	0	12
	Additional Training and/or Associates Degree	0	26	2	4	32
	Bachelor's Degree or Higher	2	44	17	1	64
Total		3	81	19	5	108

Table 14
Provision of Mentors based on Leaders' Years of Experience

		New Staff Are Assigned an Experienced Mentor		Total
		No	Yes	
Years of Experience in Early Care and Education	Less than 5	2	1	3
	5-10	12	6	18
	More than 10	25	62	87
Total		39	69	108

Table 15

Educational Requirements for Lead Teachers according to the amount of Literacy-Focused Professional Development in which the Leader Has Participated

		When making hiring decisions, what is the minimum educational level you will consider for a classroom teacher?					Total
		High school diploma	Special non-degree program (i.e., CDA, Montessori training, etc.)	Associate degree	Four- or five- year BA or BS degree	Doctoral degree	
Literacy-focused Professional Development Opportunities in which the Leader Participated in Last 2 Years	0	4	0	1	2	0	7
	1	7	2	0	1	0	10
	2-3	32	8	2	6	1	49
	4-5	3	6	2	8	0	19
	more than 5	5	6	3	9	0	23
Total		51	22	8	26	1	108

Table 16

Formal Orientation for New Staff according to the amount of Literacy-Focused Professional Development in which the Leader Has Participated

		new staff attend a formal orientation		Total
		No	Yes	
Of the professional development opportunities in which you have participated in the last two years, how many have had a literacy focus?	0	3	4	7
	1	3	7	10
	2-3	4	45	49
	4-5	1	18	19
	more than 5	4	19	23
Total		15	93	108

Table 17

Observations of New Staff according to the amount of Literacy-Focused Professional Development in which the Leader Has Participated

		new staff are observed regularly and given feedback		Total
		No	Yes	
Of the professional development opportunities in which you have participated in the last two years, how many have had a literacy focus?	0	3	4	7
	1	1	9	10
	2-3	6	43	49
	4-5	0	19	19
	more than 5	1	22	23
Total		11	97	108

Table 18

Formal Observations of Teachers according to the amount of Literacy-Focused Professional Development in which the Leader Has Participated

		How often do you formally observe each teacher's classroom practice/teaching?						Total
		No formal observations	1 time each year	2 times a year	3 times a year	4 times a year	More than 4 times a year	
Of the professional development opportunities in which you have participated in the last two years, how many have had a literacy focus?	0	2	1	3	1	0	0	7
	1	1	4	1	0	0	4	10
	2-3	2	4	12	8	3	20	49
	4-5	0	3	7	4	3	2	19
	more than 5	4	2	6	6	1	4	23
Total		9	14	29	19	7	30	108

Table 19
Type of Instructional Feedback for Teachers according to the amount of Literacy-Focused Professional Development in which the Leader Has Participated

		How do you provide feedback for instructional improvement?				Total
		No feedback given	Oral performance review	Written performance review	Both oral and written reviews	
Of the professional development opportunities in which you have participated in the last two years, how many have had a literacy focus?	0	2	0	1	4	7
	1	0	2	0	8	10
	2-3	0	3	7	39	49
	4-5	0	0	2	17	19
	more than 5	2	2	0	19	23
Total		4	7	10	87	108

Table 20

Allocation of Instructional Materials according to the amount of Literacy-Focused Professional Development in which the Leader Has Participated

		How do you ensure that your teachers have the materials necessary to meet their classroom instructional needs?				
		Teachers are given a basic inventory of supplies	Teachers are given a basic inventory of supplies and make requests for additional materials	Teachers are given a budget to purchase their own supplies	Other	Total
Of the professional development opportunities in which you have participated in the last two years, how many have had a literacy focus?	0	2	4	1	0	7
	1	0	9	0	1	10
	2-3	0	42	6	1	49
	4-5	0	14	5	0	19
	more than 5	1	12	7	3	23
Total		3	81	19	5	108

Table 21
Instructional Leader Traits, TBQ Scores, Teacher Traits, and ELLCO scores

Facility Type	Leader Highest Degree	Leader Years of Experience	Number of Literacy-Focused PD	TBQ Score	Teacher Highest Degree	Teacher Years of Experience	ELLCO General Classroom Environment Subscale	ELLCO Language and Literacy Subscale	Average Language and Literacy Subscale Score
Public School PreK	B.S.	24	5+	131	teacher is leader	teacher is leader	33	53	4.42
Private Child Care	CDA	18	1	139	CDA	5	18	25	2.08
Head Start	B.S.	15	4-5	135	M. Ed.	17	31	48	4.0
					B.S.	4	31	54	4.5
Religious-affiliated Child Care	B.S.	18	4-5	130	B. S.	18	30	37	3.08
					B. S.	20	27	35	2.92
					B. S.	20	24	36	3.00
Corporate Sponsored Child Care	M. Ed.	13	4-5	135	B. S.	18	33	54	4.5
National Franchise Child Care	CDA	13	2-3	136	CDA	32	15	15	1.25
College Campus Child Care	M. Ed.	23	1	132	M. Ed.	23	34	45	3.75
					B. S.	5	15	29	2.42

Appendix B
Director Survey

Center Name_____ **County**_____

Director Name_____

How would you best describe your school's/center's affiliation?

_____ Public Elementary school affiliated
 _____ Private or church based elementary school affiliated
 _____ Private (and not elementary school affiliated)
 _____ Head Start
 _____ Church based
 _____ Corporate sponsored
 _____ Chain
 _____ Other _____

What is the best description of your center/school schedule?

_____ Half day program
 _____ Full day program
 _____ Both half day and full day programs

How many children are enrolled in your center/school?

_____ 10-25
 _____ 26-50
 _____ 51-100
 _____ 101-150
 _____ 151-200
 _____ 200-250
 _____ 250+

How many staff (teachers and assistants including self) are employed at your center/school?

What is the cost of child care per week for children four-years of age?

_____ less than \$50
 _____ \$51-75
 _____ \$76-100
 _____ \$101-125
 _____ \$126-150
 _____ \$151-175
 _____ \$176-200
 _____ more than \$200

How would you best classify your role?

_____ Director/principal/instructional leader/
 _____ Director and regular teacher of prekindergarten classroom
 _____ Director and regular teacher of toddler classroom
 _____ Other _____

Indicate the total number of years (including the current school year) you have worked in child care and/or education.

Indicate the total number of years (including the current school year) you have served in each capacity.

_____ director/instructional leader/principal of this early childhood facility

_____ director/instructional leader/principal of a facility that provides care or education to children ranging in age from

3- to 8- years

_____ principal of a facility that serves children ages 8+

_____ teacher of children ages 3-8

_____ teacher of children ages 8+

What is your racial or ethnic identity?

_____ African American

_____ Asian

_____ Caucasian (non-Hispanic)

_____ Hispanic

_____ Native American

_____ Other _____

What is your gender?

_____ Male

_____ Female

What is the highest education program that you have completed?

_____ High school diploma

_____ Special non-degree program (i.e. Montessori training, CDA)

_____ Associate degree

_____ Four- or five- year BA or BS degree

_____ Master's degree

_____ Educational specialist degree

_____ Doctoral degree

Is your highest degree in education/child development or another field?

_____ education/child development

_____ another field

Select all of the following teaching certifications, licenses or endorsements that you hold.

_____ Director credential

_____ TECTA

_____ Child Development Associate Certificate or Credential

_____ Elementary Teaching Certificate/License

_____ Early Childhood Teaching Certificate/License

_____ Early Childhood Special Education Teaching Certificate/License

- _____ Other Special Education Teaching Certificate/License
 _____ English as a Second Language Teaching Certificate/License
 _____ Other Teaching Certificate/License (specify) _____
 _____ None of the above
- Of the professional development opportunities in which you have participated in the last two years, how many have had a literacy focus?
 _____ 0
 _____ 1
 _____ 2-3
 _____ 4-5
 _____ more than 5
- How do you stay current on “best practices” for children’s literacy development (where do you go for information)? Please select all that apply.
 _____ professional journals/magazines (i.e. Young Children)
 _____ popular magazines (i.e. Parents)
 _____ internet
 _____ workshops
 _____ conferences
 _____ professional development
 _____ other child care professionals
 _____ parents
 _____ college/graduate courses
 _____ other _____
- When making hiring decisions, what is the minimum educational level you will consider for a lead teacher?
 _____ High school diploma
 _____ Special non-degree program (Montessori training)
 _____ Associate degree
 _____ Four- or five- year BA or BS degree
 _____ Master’s degree
 _____ Educational specialist degree
 _____ Doctoral degree
- When making hiring decisions, what is the minimum number of years of experience in child care or education that you will consider for a lead teacher?
 _____ 0
 _____ 1
 _____ 2
 _____ 3
 _____ more than 3
- How do you support new staff? Please indicate all of the provisions you have in place.
 _____ no provisions are in place for new staff
 _____ new staff attend a formal orientation
 _____ new staff are assigned an experienced mentor
 _____ new staff are provided additional paid planning time
 _____ new staff are observed regularly and given feedback

How often do you formally observe each teacher's classroom practice/teaching?

☐ No formal observations
☐ 1 time each year
☐ 2 times a year
☐ 3 times a year
☐ 4 times a year
☐ More than 4 times a year

How do you provide feedback for instructional improvement?

☐ No feedback given
☐ Oral performance review
☐ Written performance review
☐ Both oral and written reviews

How do you and your staff make professional development decisions?

☐ Currently there is no plan for professional development
☐ All staff receive the same professional development arranged by the director
☐ Staff choose their own professional development from a limited number of choices arranged by the director
☐ Staff choose their own professional development
☐ The director works with each staff member individually to determine professional development needs
☐ Other

How do you assure that your teachers have the materials necessary to meet their classroom instructional needs?

☐ Teachers are given a basic inventory of supplies
☐ Teachers are given a basic inventory of supplies and make requests for additional materials
☐ Teachers are given a budget to purchase their own supplies
☐ Other _____

What are some specific things that you do or have done to facilitate classroom literacy practice?

What obstacles do you encounter in promoting literacy for children in your facility?

Please indicate the degree to which you believe the following statements

SA: strongly agree; A: agree; N: neither agree or disagree; D: disagree; SD: strongly disagree

Preschool children should not write until teachers show them how to form each letter	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children should learn new words by talking with teachers about what they are doing at the time	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children need plenty of drill and practice to learn the sounds of letters	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children need to hear the same story more than once or twice to learn new words	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children do not need to learn the meaning of a lot of words to become good readers	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children do not need to be taught the names of each letter because children can learn to read without knowing each letter and its name	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children should not talk during meal times	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children should write without worrying about conventional spelling	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children learn ending sounds by circling pictures of things that rhyme on worksheets	SA	A	N	D	SD

Preschool children learn language by talking about their ideas and expressing their feelings	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children learn letter names by singing the ABC song	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children should look at books to help them learn to read	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children should not waste time scribbling and drawing when they can be learning to write	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children learn ending sounds in words by listening to nursery rhymes	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children should be taught to hear sounds in their environment before they are taught to hear sounds in words	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children do not need to hear many stories in order to become good readers	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children learn new words as teachers define them when reading books to children	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children learn to write in part by watching teachers write	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children learn new words by connecting them to real things, objects, or activities they are doing	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children should not talk with each other during the day	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children learn to read before learning to write	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children need to learn to sit still and listen to teachers	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children need to be taught the names of each letter so they will be good readers	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children should play with words, such as making up rhymes or jump rope chants, to learn to hear ending sounds in words	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children can be taught letter names as they write their names	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children should not ask questions or talk about stories when teachers read to them	SA	A	N	D	SD

Preschool children should be taught to speak in complete sentences	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children need to learn a lot of words so they can learn to read	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children should learn to identify beginning and ending sounds in words	SA	A	N	D	SD
Preschool children need many experiences, such as going to the zoo and talking about it in order to learn new vocabulary	SA	A	N	D	SD

Seefeldt (2004) Preschool Teacher Literacy Beliefs Questionnaire

Vita

Maria Cahill completed a Bachelor of Science in History and Sociology at East Tennessee State University, and a Master of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina. She served as school library media specialist in the Beaufort County School District at Lady's Island Elementary School and Shell Point Elementary School both in Beaufort, SC. She entered the doctoral program in Education, with a concentration in Literacy, at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She earned the Doctor of Philosophy degree in August 2009. Maria Cahill is currently teaching in the School of Library and Information Science at Texas Woman's University in Denton, TX. She has presented at several conferences including the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the South Carolina Association of School Librarians.