CASE STUDY ON SCHOOL LEADERS' IMPACT ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT: *This case study aims to understand the role played by school leaders in the management and administration of English language acquisition (ELA) programs. The researchers interviewed several educational faculty from three school districts in the state of Colorado. By applying the leadership framework of inspirational motivation (Northouse, 2015), the researchers examine to what extent principals, teachers, and other educators are involved in the ELA programs within their respective schools and districts. The findings of this research demonstrate the importance of preparation for school leaders, ELA teachers, and content teachers alike in order to better support English language learners. Additionally, this case study identifies a need for collaboration between teachers and school leaders to facilitate a stronger understanding of the purpose, function, and importance of ELA programs.*

KEYWORDS: English language acquisition, educational leadership, English language proficiency, inspirational motivation

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, international schools in Saudi Arabia opened their doors and officially became an alternative to both public and private schools (Habbash, 2011). Prior to the advent of international schools, the wealthy pulled their children out of underperforming public schools and placed them in expensive private schools. While students at both international and private schools have demonstrated stronger academic performance, public school students still fall behind, particularly in the realm of English language proficiency (Habbash, 2011; Elyas & Picard, 2011; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). The issue of differing levels of English proficiency in Saudi Arabia presents challenges for public school leaders who are responsible for the management and administration of language acquisition programs. This case study aims to better understand the role of school leaders in the management of English language acquisition programs, in an effort to increase achievement and English proficiency in public school students.

Problem Of Practice

After recognizing the issues with English language proficiency in the educational system in Saudi Arabia, I became aware of issues and discrepancies in the English language acquisition (ELA) programs in the United States as well. During my graduate coursework, I met with principals to track the proficiency of reading from the elementary schools by reviewing the data of the students for three semesters. There was progress with the *Avenues* curriculum, but the principals were unhappy with this growth because it was insufficient—their expectations were focused on moving English language learners (ELLs) to the same level as native speakers. The teacher also acknowledged that she utilized many supplemental materials alongside the

curriculum, as the data supported the prevalence of growth across three semesters. The challenge that the principal and assistant principal face is related to closing the achievement gap, but my goal for this study has shifted to better understanding the role of principals in language acquisition programs.

From what I have observed, there is inconsistency in exactly how much preparation and experience principals have in understanding the needs of English language learners, educating this population, and facilitating ELA programs. Principals with little or no experience with second language acquisition or ELLs as part of the student population may find themselves responsible for managing an ELA program. The problem of practice is recognizing the challenges and issues facing ELA programs in the United States. Ultimately, my goal for this case study is to apply relevant and applicable strategies in order to resolve similar issues in Saudi Arabia's educational system.

It is necessary to clarify two key terms that will be used for this case study. For the remainder of this paper, I utilize the term English language learners (ELLs) to refer to students who are learning English as a language in addition to their native language. I also refer to the programs that support ELLs in K-12 education as English language acquisition (ELA) programs.

Research Question

What exactly is the role of school leaders in ELA programs, and how can they succeed in leading a program designed to improve English language proficiency of language learners?

Purpose/Audience

The purpose of this case study is to understand the role of school leaders in ELA programs and to determine what they need to improve the English language proficiency of ELLs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much of the literature on leadership in ELA programs has examined a few major themes: the role, preparation, and experience of principals; support for both leaders and teachers; challenges to providing educational equity; and the importance of leadership in the sustainability and long-term success of ELA programs. As the literature demonstrates, scholars tend to agree that instructional leaders for ELA programs play significant roles but must be educated and informed regarding English language learner populations, bilingualism, and diversity in order to have a significant and positive role in the long-term success and viability of their ELA programs.

The Role, Preparation, And Experience Of Principals

While the literature acknowledges the problem that ill-prepared or inexperienced principals can be detrimental to the success of an ELA program, scholars also agree that principals who are familiar with the needs of ELLs ultimately have a "trickle-down effect," rendering their role an integral part of a successful ELA program. Menken and Solorza (2014) note that school principals often lack the formal preparation required for effective managing bilingual education programs; consequently, the authors determined that principals were more likely to dismantle these programs if they had limited education regarding issues related to diversity and

bilingualism. Padron and Waxman (2016), who provide an overview of principals' honest perceptions of the strengths and challenges in their second language programs, determined that principals lack basic knowledge about the operations of their ELA programs. Negron's (2015) dissertation confirms the importance of principals' awareness of the particular needs of the students in their own ELA programs. Principals must also encourage the involvement of parents and challenge negative assumptions. Hickman and García (2014) argue that principals must be cognizant of the language acquisition process to make effective decisions regarding best practices in language instruction of ELL students within the school community.

When taken together, the literature confirms that many principals are not prepared to administer or manage an ELA program. As a result, principals who don't understand the barriers to student success may view such programs as fruitless or inadequate, resulting in the discontinuation of such programs. Such an oversight is indicative of the worst possible outcome an ELA program faces when led by an uninformed administrator. Simultaneously, those experienced with ELLs tend to see the intrinsic value of such programs and therefore make an effort to develop and maintain successful practices in ELA programs while seeking to improve the aspects that aren't as successful. As a result, it is imperative to determine what roles inexperienced principals ought to play in the administration of ELA programs, what qualifications principals should have regarding the needs of English language learners, and how principals can be incentivized to learn more about serving these populations as part of their work.

Support For Leaders And Teachers

In order to most effectively manage an ELA program, it is critical to provide ELA program leaders and instructors the support they need in order to support this population. Ovando and Casey (2010) identify the primary ways that alternatively certified, bilingual elementary school teachers need support: professional development, resources and practices, and additional support in high poverty, urban elementary schools. This study is valuable because it considers the diverse backgrounds of teachers and their preparedness when it comes to bilingual students. Al-Othman and Shuqair (2013) note that a discrepancy between theory and practice exists when it comes to increasing motivation of ELLs. Instructors particularly face myriad challenges when it comes to teaching these students. Administrators and instructional leaders should be eager to present themselves as resources to these instructors while also offering to connect them to more informative and supportive resources when necessary.

Challenges To Providing Educational Equity

Because of the population involved, equity is widely discussed in the literature on ELA program administration. Hickman and García (2014) highlight the importance of leadership, especially principals, who are social justice-minded in order to work towards equity in language acquisition programs. Ovando and Casey (2010) identify the primary ways that alternatively certified, bilingual elementary school teachers need support: professional development, resources and practices, and additional support in high poverty, urban elementary schools. These studies are valuable because they consider the diverse backgrounds of teachers and their preparedness when it comes to bilingual students.

Importance Of Leadership For Ela Programs

Finally, in order for ELA programs to remain successful and sustainable in the future, it is essential that those who are in leadership recognize the influence of their position and the

potential they have to make or break ELA programs. As previously mentioned, principals with little experience in English language acquisition, or other issues related to bilingualism or diversity, tend to be more oppositional to ELA programs because they are not convinced of the need for or importance of such programs (Menken and Solorza, 2014). These scholars establish the importance of leadership support in the long-term survival and viability of bilingual education programs. Monroy's (2012) findings validate those of Menken and Solorza (2014) in arguing that the success of dual language programs ultimately depends on the support of district leaders, specifically in aspects of "vision, goals and priorities, high performance expectations, allocation of resources, and collaboration and shared decision making" (p. iv). A failure at the level of district leadership ultimately has a domino effect on the bilingual education program, affecting the success of teachers, and students. The primary value of this study comes from how it examines the root causes of failure within a bilingual education program, which provide useful lessons for how other bilingual education programs can address such problems with solutions for making their programs more resilient.

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to determine the roles that various levels of faculty (principals, teachers, district leaders, etc.) play in their districts' ELA programs. Examining different perspectives from various levels of faculty can provide insight into multiple kinds of challenges facing these programs. To do this, I conducted multiple interviews with and observed various levels of faculty in several Colorado districts. I then compared and contrasted their responses to learn more about how responsibilities and levels of preparedness change from district to district. With these interview and observation transcriptions, I identified themes and utilized coding to find connections between responses and to existing scholarship.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

To best determine the role of district leaders and school leaders in ELA programs, this research utilized interviews with teachers and principals from multiple school districts in Colorado. For this case study, the primary method of data collection was face-to-face interviews. Through interviews, I gained access to data directly from those involved in the administration of ELA program—data I would not otherwise have had access to. I interviewed teachers, principals, and district leaders at various school districts in Colorado. Because teachers interact with and support students directly, interviewing teachers helps to better define the ways that district leaders, principals, and instructional leaders complement each other and aim to support and coach teachers in ELA programs. Each interviewee chosen for this research has at least three years of experience at their given school or district.

Subjects

For this study, I utilized my access to professionals in the field of education. Interview subjects include teachers, principals, and district leaders from various districts in Colorado. In District 1, I interviewed a content teacher at an elementary school and someone who co-teaches with content teachers as part of one high school ELA program. In District 2, I had a lot more access to faculty. Subjects include one elementary school principal, one middle school principal and

a charter school principal who has hired teachers for her school's ELA program. I transcribed interviews with multiple subjects and interviewed some subjects via email. I also utilized interview transcriptions from a previous project I completed for my master's degree. Additionally, I shadowed a professional at the district level for one hour, and I was also able to attend a 3-hour board meeting for District 2. Topics covered in the meeting included closing the achievement gap; strategies for educating Latinx students; difficulties facing the ELA program; English-Only restrictions resulting in inequity within districts in other states; and how culture awareness contributes to a growth mindset in District 2 in its entirety. In District 3, I was able to interview a district-level ELA consultant and an assistant director of a technical school. The titles and aliases of each subject are listed below:

District 1:

Luke Miller, Elementary School Content Teacher

Rebecca Bixby, ELA Teacher/Co-teacher

District 2:

Annie Hess, ELA Coordinator

Taylor Wilson, ELA Network Partner

Melissa Meyer, Elementary School Principal and former ELA Teacher

Angela Conway, Middle School Principal

Lauren Blake, Charter School Principal

District 3:

Elena Moore, District-Level ELA Consultant

Dave Warren, Assistant Director of a Technical School

Ethical Considerations

Drawing larger conclusions about a district's ELA program based on the answers of a particular respondent may be problematic. Other faculty in the district may not have a chance to offer different perspectives or to respond to some of the critiques presented. Ideally, this study would benefit from having multiple sets of perspectives at each level within a district to draw larger conclusions about the success of that district's ELA program. Therefore, participants' responses may cast an unfair judgment on a district's program.

Additionally, some participants' responses may have been influenced by their previous experiences in other states or districts. Therefore, their perspectives of their district's program may be skewed or unfairly compared to a district operating under a completely different set of circumstances and constraints.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity and reliability, I compared my results and analysis with existing literature and scholarship. This enabled me to determine whether previous results and findings are consistent with my own or whether my findings diverge significantly from previous studies. I also confirmed previous answers and my understanding of responses with some participants after the fact via email.

Limitations

Limitations to this study included receiving permission to interview participants and the time required to conduct the interviews and analyze the data. Further, there may be an imbalance in who is represented in this study. By only interviewing participants in Colorado, the limited amount of perspectives may not reflect the challenges faced by educators in other schools, districts, or states. Further, my status as an international student has made it difficult to locate and network with potential participants who fit my criteria. Therefore, my results may be more limited compared to other researchers with more connections in their professional network. Further, District 1 had very strict policies for reaching out to and interviewing faculty; therefore, I had limited access to faculty in this district. Recent literature on this topic is limited, making it harder to establish significant relationships between this study and existing findings.

Based on what the researcher observed, there is a lot of variance in the management of ELA programs, creating challenges for districts and individual programs. This prompted the researcher to examine the underlying issues and inadequacies of each district's ELA program and to utilize each district's successes to improve the others.

Theoretical Framework

In order to evaluate the results of my case study, I utilize the leadership lens of inspirational motivation, as outlined in Northouse (2015). This lens stipulates that leaders must inspire others to showcase their abilities and succeed. It charges employees with the task of seeing the organization's goals as their own. Through encouragement and support and confidence-building, leaders can transform the nature of their team. Leaders must believe in the members of their team and encourage employees to see themselves in a specific and positive way. When they see themselves as part of a team, they are given a purpose and a larger role where their successes are fundamental to the larger organization's success. The following visuals present the relationship between key elements:
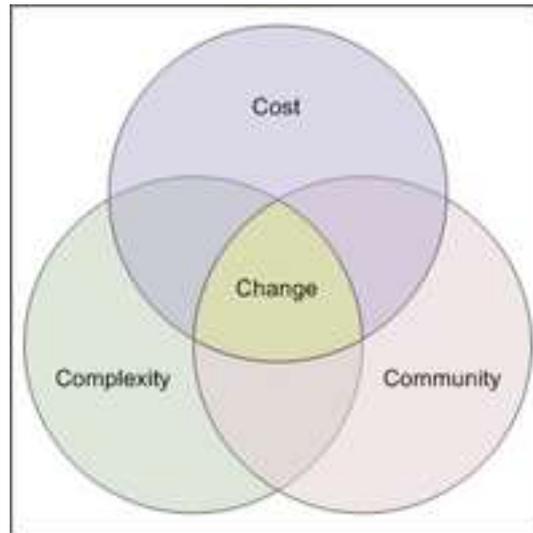
Figure 1: **Identifying Key Factors of Effecting Change. Adapted from "An unlikely leadership framework" by J. Gollner. Retrieved May 21, 2017, from http://www.gollner.ca/2008/02/an-unlikely-lea.html**

As evident in figure 1, in order to effect change, leaders must consider the relationship between cost (the financial feasibility and potential burden of any proposed solutions or of not implementing such solutions); community (the needs of the student body served by the school); and complexity (the practicality of the problem and the solution as well as the structure of the organization and its ability and willingness to collaborate).
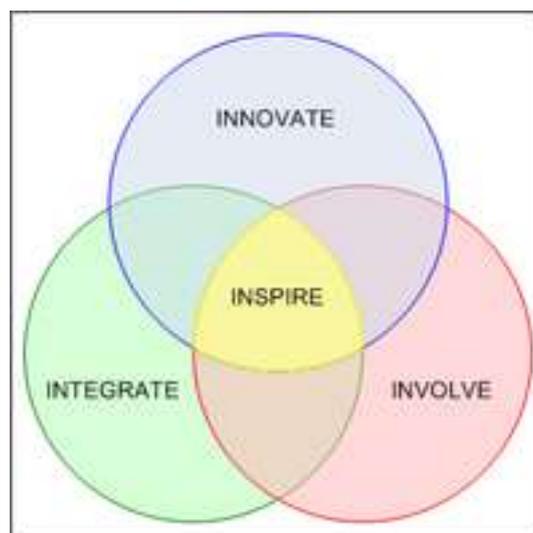

Figure 2: **Key Factors of Inspiring Teams and Employees. Adapted from "An unlikely leadership framework" by J. Gollner. Retrieved May 21, 2017, from http://www.gollner.ca/2008/02/an-unlikely-lea.html**

Figure 2 demonstrates the necessary interaction between innovation (creative and practical problem-solving targeted toward the unique challenges facing the individual student population); integration (participation and investment to facilitate shared decision-making), and involvement (collaboration between district, school, and teachers) in order to inspire faculty to effect change regarding the ELA programs.

In order to better understand how to improve the overall success of ELA programs and to strengthen the connectivity between staff in support of program outcomes, it is essential to use a leadership lens when attempting to answer this research question and to better understand how to effect change in an organization. Further, in order to inspire staff to effect change, it is necessary to consider how integration, innovation, and involvement all intersect to shape the program. I aim to apply this leadership framework in order to better identify where the gap is happening in current practice and how changes can be undertaken to resolve these issues.

RESULTS

In presenting my results, I will cover each individual district, starting with District 1, then District 2, and finally District 3. I will cover their strengths and weaknesses based on my interviews, board meeting observations, and shadowing experience.

Demographics

Before diving into the testimonies and interviews with individual faculty, it is important to provide context on each district's demographics. The figures below show the demographics for each district.
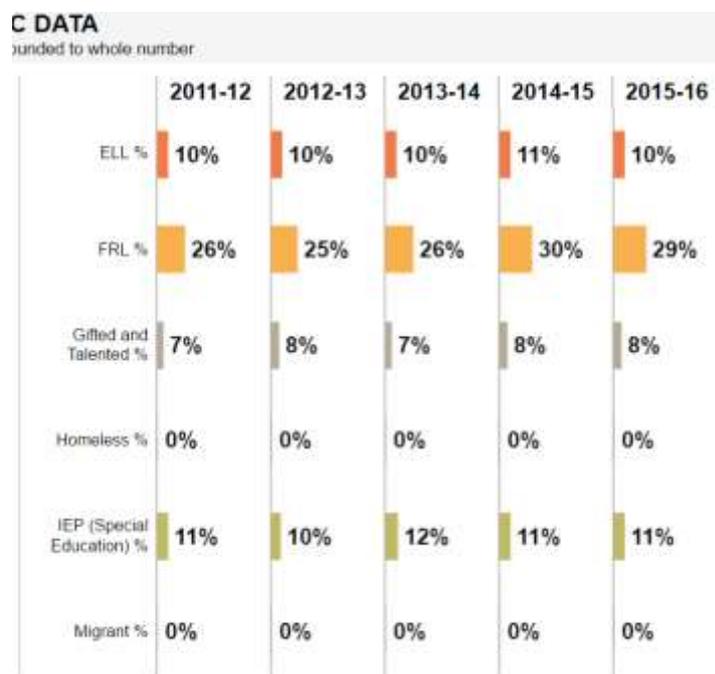

Figure 3: **Demographics of Student Body in District 1. Adapted from the Colorado Department of Education website. Retrieved May 21, 2017 from: http://www2.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/dish/dashboard.asp**

Figure 4: Demographics of Student Body in District 2. Adapted from the Colorado Department of Education website. Retrieved May 21, 2017 from: http://www2.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/dish/dashboard.asp
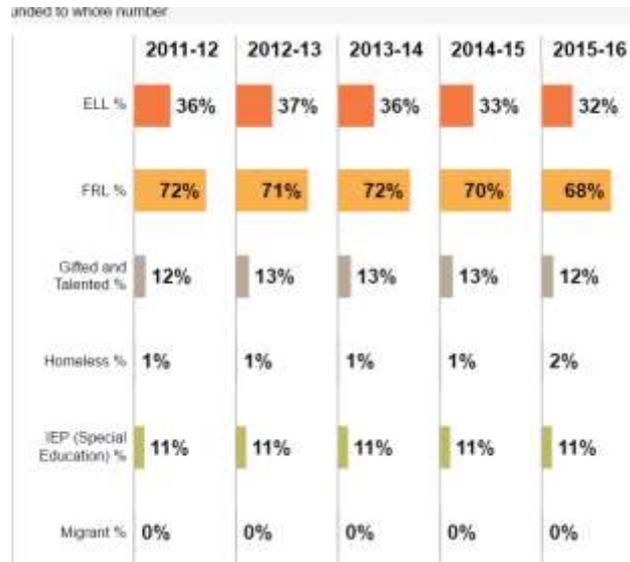

Figure 5: **Demographics of Student Body in District 3. Adapted from the Colorado Department of Education website. Retrieved May 21, 2017 from: http://www2.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/dish/dashboard.asp**

These figures show that District 2 and District 3 have much larger concentrations of ELL populations than District 1. As seen in Figure 3, District 1's percentage of ELL students consistently hovers around 10%, while Districts 2 and 3 tend to have a student body where one-third of the students are ELLs, as seen in Figures 4 and 5.

DISTRICT 1

Rebecca Bixby, co-teacher in high school ELA program. District 1 has recently changed their approach to implementing the ELA program for their students. As Bixby explained, District 1 utilizes a co-teaching model where ELA teachers and content teachers partner together to teach content and ELA instruction. One instructor develops the content, and the ELA teacher's goal as co-teacher is to make the class content accessible to English language learners according to the numbers and needs of their populations. By co-planning curriculum and sometimes delivering instruction together, this approach aims to provide students with content and course material that is appropriate for their grade level. District 1 also has instructional leaders for their ELA program. According to Bixby, typically, English language learners (ELLs) comprise no more than 40 percent of one of the classes in this program. There is also a foundational course designed for English language learners who are fairly new to both the English language and the United States.

Luke Miller, elementary school content teacher. Miller used his experience to assist students in his classroom, but the district didn't provide any training for him. He wasn't involved in the ELA program, and he trained himself to accommodate the needs of ELA students. Once the district recognized that content teachers were relying on their own self-taught expertise, this might have spurred the district to realize that they needed to change their approach and involve all teachers in training and professional development for working ELA students.

DISTRICT 2

Lauren Blake, Principal of a Charter School. Blake has experience hiring instructional leaders with the goal of compensating for her lack of expertise related to ELL students, which was necessary for the responsibility of managing the school's ELA program. As a result, the instructional leaders at this school can handle and address the needs of ELL students, but as principal, Blake is not informed or prepared when it comes to addressing the needs of ELL students.

Angela Conway, Middle School Principal. Conway explains that she is involved in choosing curriculum for the ELA program in spite of the fact that she has no training this area. Conway can recommend or review curriculum and often provides support to ELA students, but because she is unfamiliar with best practices, she doesn't know if her decisions are supporting the program and its teachers or helping to close the achievement gap. While Conway is not involved in assessment or evaluation of students, she feels like this is essential in order to choosing the appropriate curriculum. The district clearly recognizes the importance of school leaders being involved in ELA programs; however, Conway's expertise isn't in this area, and these tasks are technically not part of her job description. The district offers to support her, but she is hesitant because it's not her area of expertise or her immediate responsibility.

Melissa Meyer, Elementary School Principal and former ELA Teacher. Meyer recognizes that she lacks some expertise as principal to run the ELA program at her school but lacks much incentive and ability to compensate for it. She perceives the curriculum as the problem but roughly 30% of the school is comprised of non-native speakers. There's only one full-time ELA teacher, but Meyer hired one half-time teacher to work exclusively with the Arabic speakers, the majority of non-native speakers at her school.

Meyer is aware that her students need more time to improve their English, which is why she created opportunities for students to work individually after school, but the school has faced many challenges with this setup. Meyer's end goal is closing the achievement gap, and she attempts to develop herself professionally but receives no support from the district to do so. This is the case with many content teachers at the school as well. While some have prior experience with teaching ELA students, many are in the position where they have to fill the gap in their knowledge—not because of an onus from the district or principal but because of their own personal drive to keep up in the classroom. Many teachers have told Meyer that they didn't receive direct training in ELA issues but specified that they did have to train themselves or rely on previous training in their field to accommodate students.

Annie Hess, ELA Program Coordinator. When attending a District 2 board meeting, I heard from Annie Hess, an ELA Program Coordinator who had prior experience in Arizona before coming to this district. Hess discussed the importance of linking community engagement and diversity with support for the ELA program. Many of Hess' perspectives are informed by her prior experience in Arizona, where "it's illegal to communicate with students in a language other than English." She stated that District 2 has "a valuable chance for impacting culture" and suggested providing opportunities for school leaders to be prepared for ELA programs.

Taylor Wilson, ELA Network Partner. Wilson showed me how truancy impacts ELL students specifically. Many ELL students who have solid English proficiency and high academic performance prior to attending one high school in District 2 end up missing class and regressing in terms of their academic performance. District 2 struggles to understand the reason behind these absences, and the principal avoids intervening because she is not involved in the ELA program, assuming the absences were related to English proficiency, which was not accurate. District leaders are working hard to raise the attentiveness of school leaders and general teachers to ELL students' needs, but it seems that a lack of understanding of ELA students' needs has created regression in academic achievement.

DISTRICT 3

Elena Moore, District-Level ELA Consultant. Moore, an ELA Consultant at District 3, was an ESL teacher for more than 10 years but now works to help K-12 students reach academic proficiency in District 3's traditional and technical schools. In District 3, leader teachers are instructional leaders who ideally have enough expertise to coach and train ESL teachers. District 3 requires content teachers, specifically math and literature teachers, to attain a certificate from the district that shows they are experienced in ELA teaching regarding linguistics, pedagogy, and assessment. All ELA teachers as well as content teachers who have ELA students report to Moore. Teachers are expected to be involved in professional development and school activities as a representative for their students and to engage with the parents of these students as well. Moore is supportive of school leaders and aims to train and encourage them to pursue optional certification in TESOL.

Dave Warren, Assistant Director of a Technical School. As noted by Warren, there are specific expectations and considerations for tailoring content to ELLs in this district. In hiring and evaluating teachers, principals or assistant principals are involved but with assistance from the ELA consultant. They conduct student evaluation, make hiring decisions, and choose curricula by collaborating with the consultant. The district plays a big role, much like in District 1, but District 3 involve principals throughout the process.

DISCUSSION

Most of my recommendations revolve around individual districts and taking what's working for one district and potentially applying portions of that to other districts that are struggling with certain areas. In this section, I focus on recommendations for Districts 1, 2, and 3 based on testimony from and interviews with various administrators, instructional leaders, teachers, and principals.

DISTRICT 1

Administrators at all levels play different parts in the development and maintenance of the ELA program in District 1. There is a district coordinator who offers support and guidance to ELA instructors and oversees all schools in the district. Co-teaching is District 1's solution to the issue of students who are proficient in ELA but not in the content that ELL students need help with. Co-teaching is beneficial for both ELL and content-specific teachers as both are able to rely on each other to improve their instruction for ELL students. This approach is also more cognizant of future challenges and needs because it prepares all teachers to work with ELL students.

Because District 1 utilizes a co-teaching model that blends content and language instruction, the ELA program utilizes core curriculum for English, Science, and Social Studies. Generally, principals don't play a role in selecting curriculum of any kind for the district. However, the course focuses on familiarizing language learners who know very little English with U.S. culture aims to introduce material and subject matters that is covered in content classes. Based on the information from Miller, who I interviewed in 2016, it seems that some issues with the training and preparedness of staff may have precipitated the change to a co-teaching model, as this solution aims to establish a support system for teachers so they can work together to accommodate ELA students.

From this model, it is clear that District 1 has prioritized an approach that integrates English language learners into the classroom instead of isolating them from native speakers. This responsiveness is especially interesting because District 1 has a much smaller percentage of ELA students when compared to Districts 2 and 3, but it is clear that their smaller percentage of ELA students does not indicate less of an effort on the district's part to accommodate and support these students. The co-teaching model referenced here improves upon the previous program by including language learners and encouraging them to exchange knowledge with their peers, regardless of language background. Further, the courses provide students with opportunities for learning English by engaging with content that is appropriate for their grade level, which can potentially be more successful in closing the achievement gap.

Because of strict policies, I wasn't able to meet with or interview certain school leaders. However, we were able to meet with an ELA coordinator to learn about how she coordinates with other instructional leaders to provide support and professional development regarding the needs of ELL students. One area of concern was the issue of certification and professional development in District 1. There is no requirement for certification, but individual teachers took on this training in order to feel more confident and competent teaching ELLs. This seems to be indicative of a need that teachers recognize in their own experience, but once teachers recognize this need, they are on their own for seeking out the appropriate support and professional development. Ultimately, the district did recognize this need to support teachers in this way, which may explain the shift to co-teaching.

DISTRICT 2

District 2 is highly motivated by student success and prioritizes equity in every school. This district has a lot of resources: passionate teachers with several decades of experience, more diversity than other Colorado school districts, a much older ELA program, and ESL teachers with extensive experience because of the student body in the district. What sets District 2 apart is that their teachers are driven to return back to the district after completing their own schooling there, and these teachers are highly motivated and passionate about diversity. As Hess noted, District 2 prioritizes diversity and recognizes opportunities for involving the community in ways that other districts cannot. Further, many teachers are also personally invested in the success of the district because they send their own children there, which demonstrates a larger commitment to the overall mission and vision of the district.

District leaders recognize that it is essential for all students to feel part of the school community; however, resources for including and integrating ELA students into the community are not allocated or utilized effectively. In some schools in District 2, there aren't enough faculty to support students, and there isn't a consistent level of support from the district for school leaders. The consequences of this lack of support impacts school leaders, who are insecure about how to develop themselves professionally and identifying the issues and challenges facing the ELA programs. With support, school leaders can better identify their need for additional ELA staff in order to accommodate students. The district also lacks the ability to encourage and train staff in culturally responsive teaching. It is necessary that the district and school leaders prepare ELA faculty and content teachers to practice culturally responsive teaching as part of an inclusive educational environment. As of now, this training is clearly insufficient as teachers feel the need to professionally develop or train themselves in order to do their job well. It is clear that District 2 has greater potential to impact diversity, culture, and engagement with the community, but in order to so, the district must fully integrate and connect their resources to make sure they are used as effectively as possible.

Additionally, awareness of student needs varies greatly among different tiers of faculty. While some school leaders, teachers, and district leaders may be familiar with ELA students' needs, others may not be. Levels of awareness are also shaped by the challenges that face each school, and many faculty members are unclear about their own responsibilities and roles when it comes to ELA students. For instance, teachers may attribute problems or lack of communication to different people because they are not fully aware of who is responsible for what.

It is clear that District 2 has many valuable resources at their disposal for running ELA programs. However, the district must prioritize the effective use of such resources in order to improve the academic performance of ELL students in their ELA programs. District 2 must consider the costs of employing and hiring teachers and leaders with desirable certifications; the cost of devoting additional resources to smaller class sizes with different or supplemental curriculum; and the complexity of enacting or not enacting changes to such ELA programs. However, because the district is equipped with a larger budget and a more established set of resources, District 2 is well prepared to effect change by applying various aspects of other ELA programs to their own program.

DISTRICT 3

One of the strengths of District 3 is that all levels of faculty are involved in the ELA program: district, school leaders, instructional leaders, content teachers, and of course, ESL teachers.

The district strives to make this program as culturally responsive as possible; the focus is not only on English language acquisition, but also engagement, excellence, and equity, which all require the entire staff to be aware of challenges facing ELA students. In District 3, content teachers in math and literature who will work with ELA students must be TESOL certified. If a school does not have an ELA program or population, then content teachers would not be required to receive this training and certification. School leaders are also not required to have this certification, but they are given responsibilities that necessitate skills and experience pertaining to ELLs. This professional development and training is offered to leaders in this position, and they take advantage of these opportunities in order to ensure that they will have the necessary skills to complete job responsibilities related to ELA programs and students.

The consultant I worked with extensively was intimately familiar with the needs of ELA students; she was heavily invested in the family life of her students, their cultural values, and the need for community engagement. District 3 understands that representation matters in school districts, and when students see models that look like them or behave like them, they are able to envision more paths for their own future. A school district that recognizes cultural influences and how they might impact students' needs, whether those are religious, cultural, emotional, etc., can make a significant difference in student performance. This allows students to feel included while also demonstrating how social and emotional factors influence academic performance and involvement. It is important for all faculty to recognize how these spheres come together to shape student success. On the other hand, engagement or interaction with other native speakers depends heavily on ELLs to progress and advance through various levels of fluency. District 3 could benefit from additional opportunities for stronger ELLs who are enrolled in the ELA program to engage with native speakers. This in and of itself is not a large concern considering this district's attentiveness to the needs of ELLs, but it is a potential means of improvement.

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

All these examples and cases show that not only should ELL teachers be prepared, but all the teachers and leaders should be prepared. In these districts, there is often a lack of clarity in regards to who is involved in the ELA program and how. I consider District 3's approach a larger more applicable model, but District 2 might also benefit from integrating some co-teaching, as utilized by District 1, into their program as well. In examining each of the districts, it is clear that each district recognizes a need for change when it comes to serving students enrolled in ELA programs. Every tier of faculty recognizes the issues that face the ELA programs and that they must adapt in order to ensure these programs' success. They recognize the achievement gap and are aiming to resolve these issues. But the challenge comes when they are aiming to inspire change—there is little coordination and collaboration between tiers of faculty: the district and schools fail to communicate with each other regarding the needs of their individual ELL populations and the steps that must be taken to implement new solutions. There is also not a clear expectation for all levels of faculty to be equipped to deal with ELA students, as evident in varying requirements for TESOL certification.

I suggest that the public education system in Saudi Arabia consider how to implement co-teaching, community engagement, and additional training for school leaders and teachers in order to effect the necessary change to make ELA programs more successful. First, we have to integrate all levels of faculty so that they recognize that they are all invested in the success of

ELA students. We need to involve all levels of faculty by starting with school leaders. Districts must assign duties to school leaders and require them to evaluate teachers for ELL achievement. They should be involved in the assessment of students so they better understand where ELLs are at and get to know this population better. School leaders then need to compensate for any lack of expertise or experience by providing training, professional development, and opportunities to become TESOL-certified. That way, all levels of faculty are invested in ELL students from the very beginning. By taking these steps in this order, district leaders in Saudi Arabia can begin a cycle of inspiration: they can inspire school leaders to inspire instructional leaders to inspire teachers.

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