

Exploring the Core Elements of Humanistic Universal Existential Leadership in K12 Educators:

A Qualitative Approach

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Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy Leadership

University of the Cumberlands

August 2023

Approval for Recommendation

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the faculty and administration of the University of the Cumberlands.

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Acknowledgments

I want to thank God first for every bit of help and spiritual fortitude to see this program through. I want to thank the entire faculty within the doctoral program at The University of The Cumberlands, specifically Dr. Brian Stark, Dr. Logan Isaacs, Dr. Jake Bryant, Dr. Greg Benson, Dr. Sarah Nichter, and without a doubt, Dr. Nathan Hamblin. I would like to thank my mentors and family, specifically Kim and Rob Santana. To my wife Amarilis and my children may this serve as an example that anything in faithful perseverance for the betterment of humanity is certainly possible. Lastly, to my grandmother Cordelia Dickson-Bell, who risked and sacrificed absolutely everything to get me out of below-marginal beginnings.

Abstract

A descriptive qualitative exploratory study composed of real-life experiences shared by stakeholders in the field of education. Including a summary of findings in full faith and effort for the betterment of education and conducted purposefully to aid in the retention of teachers and development of leaders. Wherein, the hope was to develop leaders that show altruistic humanity, exemplifying behaviors of full-hearted, sentient, universal beings – as districts build schools. The exploratory qualitative methodology of this study included data from interviews conducted with current and previous educators. The study included experiences and perspectives from fifteen randomly selected participants. Random selection was the most suitable method that would provide a fair chance for each candidate to be selected or not selected. The purpose of the study was to identify the current qualities, and needed qualities in future leaders, to develop and train better educational leaders. The conditions in which the interviews were conducted included solely one on one interviews. Recorded in writing and audio, (no video) the data from the study was analyzed, evaluated, and transcribed within all ethical guidelines of IRB requirements. The results from this study illustrated a problem hardly understood in the world of education, which was that of teacher retention and educational leader development.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Overview

Every component of this exploratory descriptive qualitative study was used to identify current components that may allow districts to retain teachers, meanwhile building educational leaders that could best fit the needs of current and future educators. Once the needs were identified, the ideal qualities educators needed to see in their current and future leaders were also identified, known as humanistic universal educational leadership (HUEL). The purpose was to effectively create educational environments where leaders promoted curricula that nurtured the development of students as complete, sentient existential beings. Information from the study could also be used to structure professional development, school-wide initiatives, and district-wide initiatives and give insight into broadening the spectrum in universal focus for humanistic-existential leaders.

Teacher attrition has been a phenomenon that could be looked at through a finer lens. Retaining teachers and training better educational leaders could help school districts overcome one of the major hurdles faced in today's world when it comes to education – retention. Public schools are struggling to maintain, attain, and properly train staff as well as maintain student enrollment at a high level within their buildings. Moreover, hopes for future use of the information in this study included (but are not limited to) developing leaders that could handle the foreseen and unforeseen educational challenges of the future, not just on an in-school-to-school basis, but on a regional, national, international, and global scale in the realm of education.

The importance of prediction is only as valuable and meaningful as the accuracy of the prediction. The ability to make proactive instead of reactive decisions would arguably provide

leaders with the best-fit solutions. Moreover, it was vital to understand that without proper evaluation of past made mistakes, the possibility of recreating the same mistakes of the past in the present and future became greater. Leaders of the past and the present could be best fit to meet the educational challenges of tomorrow if they were to consider the current needs, wants, and issues faced by district employees and stakeholders within school buildings. The ability to meet human demands meant that, in turn, there must be an ability for the leaders to understand humanity beyond the conceptual perception of the self. The simplicity of educating humans extends beyond years after the classrooms (Friberg & McKinney, 2019).

Economic impacts were just as significant within the labor force as they were concerning the consumption and use of resources. The ability of tomorrow's humans to succeed as a species in the future depends heavily on the level of education received today and tomorrow. Today's educators must make adjustments to meet future demands. The unprecedented challenges, such as COVID, allowed the world of education to evolve in ways never thought of before. However, the aftermath of the pandemic has allowed educators such as the participants involved in this study to give perspective on the past and give insight into their thoughts and feelings for the future. Something like a pandemic, or any other worldwide (even local) adjustment to education, called for adaptive leaders with different skill sets than the educational leaders of the 1980s. The focus of the study honed in on the personal perspectives and feelings of educators, but also allowed insight into future needed training, calling for even different candidates, and perhaps even igniting thought to creating/changing policies that best meet such predictable and unprecedented demands, while keeping the humanity of the individual and the preservation of such humanity at heart.

The implications of the study aimed to purposefully search for exploratory perspectives from real-life participants (educators) that could serve as data points for ramifications made in education. Analyzing the conceptual idea of the current use of artificial intelligence within the classrooms and the future application of such intelligence concerning the human educator. Moreover, the study focused on developing training that harbored the development of teachers and educators, rendering them adaptable and flexible to the educational and human needs of tomorrow's humans, meanwhile providing leaders with the tools to retain educators within their educational buildings and districts.

Background and Problem Statement

Teacher attrition rates have increased tremendously beyond the turnover rates of 12% in the 1980s, where now “roughly nine out of every 10 teachers hired each year are replacing colleagues who left voluntarily, more than two-thirds of whom quit before retirement” (Anonymous, 2021, p. 1). Variables attributing to the rise of teacher turnover rates ranged from lack of fulfillment to job unhappiness, countless meetings, unreasonable mandates, pay rates, and lacking support or leadership from administrators (Loewus, 2021). The trickle-down effect of the collapse in the educational system has led to rising gaps within instruction by demographics, rising debt within the infrastructure of governments, and a lack of funding and support from central governmental systems due to demands that have been seemingly impossible to meet.

Nationally in the United States, society has forever seen a difference in the type of administrator in offices, to the lowering of basic requirements to become an educator, the constant dropping proficiency rates, and low scores across the board in the secondary public school systems. For instance, the increasing economic gaps have shown an increase in scores, where students who live in poverty score lower than those who do not and have been even before

the COVID pandemic (Barshay, 2021). In addition, the list of downward pushing variables, an increase in economic gaps, could be tied to the decreasing performance scores across the board in North America, let alone in low socioeconomic regional and local pockets.

Attrition rates have been climbing to higher numbers. Meanwhile, principals and administrators have been turning in their keys and leaving their educational professions. Dropout rates still rose for specific demographics, while testing data has suggested that educators are yet to figure out how to close the gap. The reality could be seen clearly in not only the performance of states but also in the number of teachers needed in the profession, in conjunction with proficiency standards that continued to be lowered for major subject areas to create reachable baselines. As of February 2022, “according to a National Education Association survey, a staggering 55% of educators are thinking about leaving their profession earlier than they had planned” (Walker, 2022, p. 1). Attrition as a problem was not just seen in the United States but is recognized as a global issue. An article in Bloomberg suggested that teachers felt “undervalued, burned out, lacking support from administration and community stakeholders” (Querolo et al., 2022, p. 2).

On a global scale, educational leaders have been fighting against the usual variables of funding, governmental support, and national stability. Despite struggling, it has always been known that well-developed nations provide better educational opportunities than less in underdeveloped nations. The addition of school closings during the pandemic led educators to find that the “average learning loss standardized by the length of the school closure was close to 100% in Low- and Middle-Income countries, and 43% in High-Income countries, with a standard deviation of 74% and 30%, respectively” (Alghren et al., 2022, p. 1).

Challenges such as school closings, pandemics, rising attrition rates, and increasing performance gaps were often almost impossible to overcome. Leaders within educational buildings and districts have been asking for constant educational demands to be met, from both teachers and students, sometimes and often without regard for any humanity. Pacing charts that have been itemized to meet a maximum capacity of time, inundated by a high amount of academic knowledge skills to be taught and mastered within a short period. A formula that was made to squeeze the most out of every day in hopes of meeting the demands of standardized tests used to measure performance and proficiency. The issue has created a revolving cycle where needs and wants hardly matched funding, support, time, and support. At the core of its exploratory roots, this study expands on the importance of understanding components that were leading to a decline in performance, morale, and an increase in attrition rates. Historical data has shown that the current morale in education has left little hope for proactivity and innovation for problems of the future due to a dire need for reactionary solutions for current demands and problems in education (Loweus, 2021).

Moreover, the use of technology has raised flags for both the instructor and the learner, where one of the questions to be posed is that if artificial intelligence could replace the educator, it could in turn also replace the learner. Humanity within buildings was a starting point of focus towards a solution, not just for effective leadership, but also for effective humanity. Persevering the beautiful artistic components of education is just as important as maintaining and supporting the scientific components of education. Likewise, it was seemingly important to maintain focus on the development of teachers and students as relative as that focus point is to current world problems and needs (Loweus, 2021).

The use of assessments and standardized tests has also led to little ramification within education that pushed for the existence of human thought within education and presses more for the memorization of information comparable to that of a machine/computer. Educators were prompted to use digital tools and components that allowed them to monitor and measure the progression of knowledge attainment, almost only limited to the understanding of past historical content and the application of content vocabulary/terms to already pre-determined information. There has been little if any room left for the creation of new information, for the living, breathing human in secondary public education. Moreover, what could be said about progression in the creation of assessments and/or applications and programs that provide assessments is that their increased usage has claimed that districts should be “interested in connecting tests to teaching, learning, and cognition” (Von & Bennett, 2017, p. 9). One argument that could be posed is that the human of tomorrow would need to understand the past, but also apply principals that required thinking of the unknown more so than memorization of the known. Thus, the human of tomorrow would need to be more well-rounded, and perhaps more in tune with the issues of planetary needs, existence, and the rooted relationship of most issues related to the presence of life.

The extensive and exhausting use of standardized testing has also led to the constant pressure of passing and proficiency. Human beings have been held to the bar of passing standardized examinations to show their proficiency in tested subjects such as mathematics, civics, language arts, and science. Yet, there is another argument that the human learner and educator constantly were caught in, the difference in terminology, definition, and attainment of passing and/or proficiency. Take for instance the idea that a student is proficient in, for instance, a 7th-grade CIVICS student in the state of Florida if they scored a 45% out of 100% on their end-

of-course test. Ideally, and in reality, 45% is not a number that should be defined as proficient, and it certainly is not a number that should be attached to the word passing. Similarly, the same could be said for language arts, where despite the increase in numerical value 64% is not a number to deem proficient if the score is out of 100%.

Then, once states get the students end of course subject area scores, schools were tasked with scheduling students in the appropriate classes to make sure that the students remain proficient, increase proficiency, and/or attain proficiency. However, there has been little if any success shown by the use of this formula, given that school grades in the state of Florida (for example) are once again out of 100% but schools could be deemed to be “A” schools if they reached a school grade of 64%. Relating such low and alarming rates and numbers to learners and educators for the sake of the continuance in the usage of standardized assessments has contributed greatly to the attrition rates of teachers and staff members within schools. Because the goal of education has lost the need to develop essence in humanity and instead placed pressure on developing productive members of economic societies. The use of standardized testing has also led to attrition rates in educational leaders and even contributed to drop out rates. What once was used and created to increase the level of scholar-shipped students into higher-level institutions, has now essentially worn out the educational masses to increase dropout rates by learners and attrition rates by teachers instead (Von & Bennett, 2017).

Likewise, the treatment of the educator and the learner needed reform. The evidence was seen in the presented data shown in this study, both by the study of the historical past, current statistical background measurements in rates of failure, and the entirety of the interview data compiled which illustrated the issues that were lived daily in real-time by real people still today. Where lacking reform in thinking has led to very little progressive moment in student

performance data, perhaps due to the allegiance in the relationship between the standardized test and the constant measurement of student performance. The concept of the human learner and the human teacher minimized the value of their established and/or projected performance result. The amassing rates of educational instructional staff attrition lack justification in the modern world. Similarly, so do student dropout rates and/or failure rates nationwide.

The cry for the need of humanity within the world of education seldom has been heard nor sounded louder than today. If educational leaders posed their main problem to be student performance, funding, and teacher attrition, then the humans within the world of education have expressed in action their displeasure with the current state of educational management and practice. This, in turn, called for educational leaders to think outside of the box in the formulation of their solutions to such problems as attrition rates and failure rates. The practices of the past have led to the current problems, snowballed into compacted issues that placed the instructional public school educator at the bottom of one of the lowest-paid professions in the United States.

The lacking value for the educator has led to the neglectful shoulder of society on public education. Where federal governments have been constantly unable to provide beyond marginal basic needs, and the common statement of “equity is not always equal” flooded the creation of policies within districts. The problem within education has forever been tied to the ideology that there needs to be integrity and protection against the violation of power within education (De Lissovoy, 2015).

Purpose of the Study.

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative study was to allow leaders to understand the current/past human needs and wants of stakeholders within the educational building. Meanwhile

providing the reader with evidence of real-life perceptions of realities lived throughout educational experiences during their careers. Educators seemed to have lost sight of the importance of supporting, building, and promoting our human beings within the building. The term stakeholder included students alike, parents, and communities. School leaders would be easily pressed to express that it was almost impossible to meet many demands by the student population, not just because of funding, but due to red tape legislation and terms of conditions which would create liabilities for districts and their leaders on a stakeholder-to-stakeholder basis. Serving our communities, nurturing our students, and supporting our teachers has arguably never been more challenging than now (Mizunoya et al., 2022).

The study and results of the works in this study shined a light on the specific needs and want of in-building stakeholders to help develop better leaders, more inclined to increase human awareness and ability to understand the result of actions on a regional, local, and global scale. The study hoped to provide educational leaders with initial clues to help develop training for future leaders, decreasing attrition and increasing retention rates of in-building functioning stakeholders. Providing insight allowing districts to make actionable adjustments and changes to educational leaders' current and future training. In turn, it positively impacting the current and future level of school-wide cultures, directly impacting achievement gaps and all subgrouping data directly related to all functioning in-building stakeholders (Al-Sharif, 2011).

The exploratory approach to the study allowed the study to have flexibility in the areas of focus. Maintaining concentration in attrition, retention, and capacity within leadership, meanwhile sharing the individual perspective of actual real-life experiences. The ability to see the relationship between theory, practice, and understanding was embedded in the purpose of the questions and interview process of the study. Allowing perspectives and experiences to illustrate

the focus points of attrition, retention, and capacity to connect. Some have argued that in education, leaders have made more accommodations to the normalization of negative climates than to implementing policies that support positive cultural reform. The purpose of this study was to find any evidence that could support and/or argue that “the response of academic leaders and their faculties has often been to accommodate rather than resist such pressures” (Bok, 2017, p. 67).

The information derived from this study could be used by school districts and school boards to also improve the working conditions for stakeholders within their buildings. The purpose of this study was to increase the level of humanity within school buildings and to provide a safe working environment that promotes healthy positive progression (growth) for all stakeholders. Likewise, another major purpose of this study was to ignite thought, conversation, and the planting of small progressive seeds that tasked future educators to strive toward positive educational reforms. Anything that affected humanity positively and enhanced the world of educators and learners has been worth the thought and conversation. Specifically during such trying times when in the past, “particularly when current research suggests that students now are spending less time processing and thinking, in comparison to the way students were processing and thinking about 20-30 years ago” (Bok, 2017, p. 169).

Finally, the purpose of this study was to increase awareness of the current needs and wants of educational staff members and faculty members within educational buildings. The purpose of this study was to allow educational stakeholders to have a voice and share their experiences, which support in turn the current data and showed the increased displeasure for the state of education. The study aimed to give educational leaders insight into what would be needed and could be needed (even done in suggestion) to provide solutions and comfort to the

human educator. The study also aimed to give insight into foreseeable problems educational leaders of the future may face. Allowing districts and states to make adjustments in their training and become proactive and active in combatting future problems in education. The purpose of this study was to allow districts to create educators and educational leaders that are self-aware and also living breathing, existential and universal beings. Tasking educational leaders to set their sights on the preservation and progression of humanity and challenging educational leaders to create modalities in the measurement of intelligence that allow for the development of human thinking, the expansion of human possibility, and the expression of human life. The purpose of the study was based on good faith, that all learning humans, should strive to continue to learn and create, far into the future, meanwhile protecting the principles of humanity that keep mankind healthy and alive. The purpose of this study was to promote reform as well as to promote the use of this study for future works that far expand the knowledge and information presented in the results of this study (Morse, 1992).

Significance of the Study

A study of this magnitude hoped to create a starting point for future works and developments in humanistic universal existential leadership. Results from the study have magnified needs that perhaps have been identified before in some capacity, but not directly tied to its regional, local, national, and global impacts. Results from this study can be applied to any district, school, or country with human beings as the functioning stakeholders. Moreover, a study of this significance could lead to significant changes in educational policies, building school cultures, promoting teachers, and overall development of educators. The idea and primary significance of a study of this magnitude was to create solutions that applied not just to the human of today but to the human of tomorrow. Meeting the changes and demands with

adaptation and adjustments. For instance, even in a capital economy, anyone could argue that the need for the well-rounded human still claims a high demand, where “human resources executives who do the hiring are more likely to value the practical skills and knowledge that will enable new employees to “hit the ground running” (Bok, 2017, p. 68). Redefining specific terms within ethics and outlined policies to meet demands proactively, meanwhile nurturing the well-being and development of all humans within educational systems.

The results of the study placed importance on the position of mankind within the bounds of the universe, starting with the locality of learning, from the small or big school classroom to the impact of education as a whole on a global scale. The globalization of education to meet the demands of economies has reached a wall where proficiencies in reading continued to decline meanwhile attrition rates rose, and the overall state of education struggled to maintain human components within the classroom based on the pending continuous demand for the implementation of technology and artificial intelligence within classrooms. The significance of this study was only as valuable as its application to real-life practice in education, which, in turn, supports the use of the exploratory methodology in providing open-ended questions, that could show the expression of open-minded participants, living the realities of actual functioning, active educators.

Any initiatives, actions, propositions, training, and developments that come from (or are motivated by) information provided in this study, have defined the impact of this study on education. Even if the impact of this study were to be small, or started as a pioneering movement within the concepts of its educational dichotomies. The significance of this study was ultimately defined by the findings within the answers given by participating educators not just the future use of the information in this study.

The significance of this study serves as a starting point for thought, conversation and perhaps pioneering from other researchers alike that wish to expand on this research. Moreover, the significance of this study aimed with purpose at closing what “many employers complain about - a skills gap” (Bok, 2017, p. 77). Closing a skills gap would mean that educators make ramifications to the methods used in the delivery of instruction as well as testing. Moreover, the significance of this study included the impact of this study on other studies that could come from this project. Likewise, the significance of this study included the voices and stories of the participants that willingly participated in this project, in hopes that their truth would improve the lives of other educators. Meanwhile providing them (the individual participant) with the self-acknowledgment that their stories were not only valid but that perhaps their works mattered as they found themselves to be existential beings living within the universe.

Research Questions

The research questions directly affected the significance of this study, which relied heavily on the study interview results, allowing the study to focus on multiple human experiences in the field of education. Likewise, the results and information from this research have also allowed the information to be taken further in application to other parts of the world, regardless of economic development and/or lack thereof.

There were two main research questions of focus in this study:

1. According to education practitioners, what specific human qualities are likely to exist among future existential educational leaders?
2. How can educators develop better future existential leaders by specifically identifying the current human and universal needs in education?

Interview questions provided deeper insight and specificity into the actual human needs of stakeholders currently in education. Ranging from self-development to perceptive care and hoping for future developments in education. Allowing future administrators to understand, predict, determine, and adapt to humanistic needs/changes in the future of education. The realities shared by educators could provide research data that could be truly applicable to existing, human educators, currently working within school buildings and perhaps to future educators, yet to commit themselves to public servitude.

The research questions also promoted deep thinking and processing of the questions not only to the participants but also to the reader. Be it that the reader was an educator, or not, the reader for sure was once a learner, or perhaps still is. More importantly, the reader in all hopes, was a human, existing within the cosmos, breathing, living, and experiencing the current issues pressing planet Earth. Thus, in turn, the research questions affected the reader, the study and all included participants in this study.

Theoretical Framework

This study was closely related to existential-humanistic, authentic, transformational, servant, and adaptive leadership. The fundamental focus of the theoretical framework in this study relied heavily on behavioral components. Where in purpose, looking to isolate the specific behavioral human needs in building stakeholders that were not being met by administrative and leadership staff. The use of interviews within the study and exploratory methodology in qualitative descriptive research supported the idea “that purposeful sampling was the most appropriate strategy for descriptive qualitative research and that sampling should allow the study to capture and describe the phenomena over a variety of situations” (Hunter et al., 2019, p. 5). The theoretical inclination of this study fell more into alignment with the works previously

conducted by Dr. Frederick Herzberg. Where by nature, humans sought a connection between what they did and what they intrinsically felt, believed, wanted, needed, valued, etc. When it came to the workplace for instance, Herzberg indicated that “an individual would not suddenly become satisfied with their job if you suddenly change the environment or remove what is bothering them” (Kurt, 2021, p. 1). In the case of teachers and educators (at any level), the example of pay could be one simple intrinsic motivator that was leading to countless numbers of resignations and walkouts from the profession. Educators wanted to feel valued, and the exploratory methodology of this study illustrated with actual testimony of the true feelings, thoughts, and needs of current and past educators. The connection between such said thoughts, opinions, needs, and wants from educators showed with specificity what individual humans defined as important in keeping them in the profession and what was not so important.

This study was also tied to the humanistic leadership theory from Maslow’s theory of human needs to the altruistic behavioral leadership actions displayed by humanistic leaders. Including behaviors that “may conflict with the interest of the individual leader(s) and/or organization but altruistically benefit the development of the stakeholder” (Von, 2020, p. 772). The idea shared with the humanistic theory in this study was that educators developed leadership that could properly determine risk-reward in terms of attempting solutions to issues that have never been seen before, meanwhile hoping for a better future. Also, providing effective solutions for future problems to become proactive instead of reactive in similar situations at different school locations.

There have been previous works completed that were related to humanistic principles in leadership. Previous works explained that the combination of both Herzberg’s and Maslow’s theories should be put into practice as a “blend of both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

factors, as shown by both theories, cannot be isolated, as the regular application of both factors would produce robust employees energized for higher performance” (Ihensekien, 2004, p. 1). Placing importance on identifying the intrinsic motivators for every living human within each building would be the most ideal of objectives. With such a goal being hard to attain, one of the most attainable objectives would be to understand the shared commonalities, wants, and needs shared by most humans. For instance, taking into account the fact that being human alone was valuable and with that the role of, “human behavior and their work capacity while taking into consideration their psychological, physical, economic, and physiological attributes” (Ihensekien, 2004, p. 2).

The study was also closely attached to authentic leadership because it required leaders to have a self-awareness that what they said, how they said it, what they did, and how they did it truly mattered not just for the sake of ethics and respect, or policy; but because placing value in human life was essential. The theoretical frameworks of this study called for leaders to authentically allow stakeholders within the building to relate effectively on a human level to them. Being able to truly model human behaviors and care that are positive in altruistic definition to the development of all moving parts within the organization. By nature, humans needed and wanted a sense of belonging, a sense of value. The inclusion of experiences in this study allowed readers to understand from a relatable sense all humanity, the emotions, thoughts, and events shared by the participants. Allowing the shared events of participants to share their individual experiences, supports the idea that “intrinsic motivation experiences in humans are not only a discretionary engagement, but it is discovered to be an inherent factor” (Ihensekien, 2004, p. 4).

Moreover, the theoretical frameworks of this study were also aligned to specific aspects of transformational leadership, specifically identifying the needs and characteristics of universal

existential-humanistic leaders, being able to develop current leaders to meet the current and future demands of not just educational challenges but stakeholders within the building. Behavioral trainings developed from the results of this study could potentially lead to transforming behavioral analysis, evaluations, training, and, eventually, actions of future educational leaders. Aspects of servant leadership theory shared within this study included the importance of recognizing followers, their achievements, wants, and needs and avoiding the development of egocentric qualities in administrative leaders. Developing individuals and teams of leaders devoted to developing other human beings, nurturing their development, and showing genuine care for their existence.

Likewise, aspects this study shared with adaptive leadership were (but are not limited to) behaviors that promote pliability, flexibility, and creativity in leaders. Furthermore, the disposition to be receptive to the ideas of others and to remain open to exploring novel strategies through research was crucial for leaders in a formal setting. Some of the behavioral components also shared within this study attached to adaptive leadership included the ability of leaders to adapt to future unforeseen problems, be those coming from technological issues and/or human issues. Creating leaders that could adjust to changing learning methods as human intelligence changes (Maxwell, 2007).

The theoretical framework of this study posed a challenge as well to future educators, to preserve the components of natural humanity within the walls of educational buildings. For if education was to survive, it was to survive in the hearts of mankind. If education was to progress the limitations of man, then it was to do so by the theoretical frameworks in any works that promoted the longevity of mankind and a healthy planet. The correlation between education and healthy behaviors was relative in terms of closeness, for example, “negative stereotypes about

female intellectual abilities occur in children as young as 6 years old and can shape a child's educational path and career choice" (Buckley et al., 2022, p. 1). Similarly, one could argue that actions of violence and war, and the perception of lacking value in human life were behavioral components most likely shared by people that lack altruistic education. In this same line of thinking, looking at the access to natural resources and/or resources period heavily depends on socio-economic backgrounds and it was also closely related to access to proper education. Each component of humanity, in essence, could be traced back to access to adequate education or the level of education received.

There were constant pressing hardships for instance on public schools that were located in areas with low socio-economic census data and low property tax values. The realities experienced by educators and humans within these educational communities often shared the same commonalities attached to lacking resources and low retention of staff, with low attendance issues, proficiency issues, and constant discipline issues. The theoretical framework of this study aimed to focus on components that perhaps could be applied to the development of leaders and educators that could improve conditions in all schools but specifically striving school systems looking to increase the awareness of the value of human life meanwhile developing new ways of retaining and training staff members (Al-Sharif, 2017).

Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations of this study were directly related to sampling size and groups. For instance, the sampling size was 15 participants, each stakeholder within different organizations, but it did not include students and/or parents as contributing points of data in reference. Other limitations included regional location, where focus on sampling within the schools was only available in the area sampled. However, the results from this research could be

applied to living, breathing, existential beings in any location on the face of planet earth. Other limitations included the information acquisition method, which was qualitative methodology in nature, and did not render as many data points as one could gather in qualitative research methods.

The study's limitations were identified as working with a centralized and small local region, with only three schools and fifteen participants. To gather and address limitations on a larger scale, permission would be needed to work with sampling from a larger regional and/or national pool. The findings of any further limitations and/or results influenced by the said above limitations were addressed in chapter five of this study. Limitations of the study included the location of the schools in this study within the United States, where the conditions of other schools in other places and/or planetary locations outside of the United States may be different, and the trends presented in this study may not be prevalent and/or existent within those systems.

Moreover, the interview guide was not reviewed by experts, which was also a limitation of the study. Likewise, the individual conducting the study was not an expert in the study. The interviews were short in length, which limited the amount of information that could be shared. The study was also not pilot tested. Finally, the exploratory nature of the study limited the study to what was found and could be found. Rendering the possibilities, results and varying answers to only be limited by the small number of participants, the inexperience of the individual conducting the study, in conjunction with the timeframe of interviews. Other limitations of the study could be attached to the need for expert-led research within the framework of this study. Providing broader and better ideas, methods and measures could and would most likely lead to better and more accurate results. Thus, the limitations of the study could be held to the amount of attention, attraction, and/or interest gained for the topic.

Assumptions

Through ethical recruitment, participants understood the level of privacy and anonymity in each component of the study, from individual research explanations to the overall privacy of each conversation leading up to the actual interview of each participant. Assuming that participants answered questions honestly was an essential part of the methodology. Addressing some of the classical misconceptions of administrative staff members, where perhaps leaders thought that a simple smile or being nice was enough to impact morale in a building. The study addressed the need for genuine connections beyond those assumed in simple work “team building outings” where staff members perhaps socialize in a controlled environment, still understanding the dynamics of title, language, ethics, policies, and power. The study has shown raw truth in answers, where participants could assume that since their identity (nor title in location) would ever be shared, they could openly and accurately express their experiences in education without regard for punishments or repercussions.

Through proper screening, the selection of candidates allowed for the sharing of experiences with unbalanced similarities. Meaning while recruiting and conducting initial perspective participant surveys, asking questions that allowed for a wide range of experience to be taken into account, along with multiple genders, ages, titles, responsibilities, and tenure, as well as allowing the study to include participants that were new to the profession and participants that were retired. Providing a broad sampling within the 15 included and counted participants within this Study.

The study's assumptions were identified as working with a centralized and small local region, with only three schools and fifteen participants. Limiting assumptions to only the results of the interviewed participants. Again, gathering and addressing assumptions on a larger scale

would require permission to work with sampling from a larger regional and/or national pool. The findings of any further assumptions and/or results influenced by the above assumptions were addressed in chapter five of this study.

Definitions

Historical definitions of humanism, existentialism, and universal learning have been studied and shared through a recent article in 1997. Dating back as far as 1945, Dr. Nimrod Aloni shared extensive works related to the historical and current shared consensus on the definition of each word. When addressing concepts related to the entire human race, it was essential to hone in on authenticity and accepted meanings, definitions, and examples of all contributing factors to the study. Most of the work shared by Dr. Aloni expands on the classifications of humanistic education by both reviewing perspectives the romantic, classical, existential, and radical (Aloni, 1997).

Humanism was, by a shared majority, a philosophy that focused on the natural aspects shared by the human race. From emotional needs to thoughts, actions, and shared perspectives in the position of the human species on earth. Historically, philosophers have embodied humanism with the development of the self and deep reflections on how the self-impacted and affected others. Existentialism has a shared definition by a large majority as well, though it has changed throughout history; in its foundation, it was the question of “who” and “why” us. The questions regarding the purpose and existence of humans are "Why are humans here?" and "For what reason are humans here?" Existential questions are usually questions humans ask themselves since they were young, perhaps looking out into the stars or onto the ocean's vastness; typically, one could argue it has been thought that separated us from other species. Instead, educators

should understand that it has been a human need and ability to progress, to adapt in that thinking that separates humans from other living species (and dead ones).

Focusing on the future, past definitions of universal learning have created learning components that make learning accessible to every stakeholder “without limiting their perspective” (Behling & Tobin, 2018, p. 20). Educators could reach back as far as 1968 for policies that called in ramifications within learning structures. For instance, the Architectural Barriers Act “mandated access for “physically handicapped persons” to buildings created or modified with federal funds” (Behling & Tobin, 2018, p. 2). Fast forward to the 1990s, and educators found the beginnings of educational ramifications called for the accessibility of education by virtually all living stakeholders within educational buildings. This phenomenon stretched thinking even for developmental content for teachers, administrators, and educational leaders outside of school facilities (Behling & Tobin, 2018). Where not by opinion, but in fact, the foundation of universal learning design centralized into four major principles. For starters, directed by the creators of the Universal Learning Design (Dr. David Rose and Dr. Ann Meyer), standards should be set high, goals must be set, flexibility in the curriculum, and permanence of learning through self-reflection (Scwhartz, 2022).

Much was left to be applied from these principles and thinking to the current and future state of education, additionally its impact and use within staff development, curriculum development, and leadership training. One of the main questions yet to be answered was that of quality and what is defined as high quality in definition from one school to another, from one teacher to another, from one human to another, not to mention the term access. At the centrality of each word within the ideology of existential universal leadership was the defined term of humanism. A term kicked around for centuries [humanism] as the barbaric measures of a

prideful man, to the courageous efforts of global civil rights leaders to bring about balance in all humanity. Even more, was to be said of the political alignments that can define the word so differently, the political concerns and focuses that divide humanity into thinking that people each want something different. The reality (arguably) was that humans wanted to live. Humans wanted to exist. From the beginning, people have been striving to think of themselves in whatever living space from an early age, wondering what they would become. Whom would they be?

It's no wonder individuals were each existential in thinking, but the question came into play when individuals gain power and position. Do people maintain humanity, where do they learn it, and what do they define humanity? As they grew and became leaders, the demands pressed upon us determined leadership, not just the methods they were taught to lead with. The resources with which people could lead and how they can inspire and guide others. The very fabric of individual humanity allowed people to share similar wants and needs collectively. The wheel of production and gains divided humans, each into creatures of production.

Ask yourself, when was the last time you saw a child that did not understand the perception of the self-behave selfishly? People could argue that the humanistic realization of the self leads humans to fight for survival or was taught through competition. Either way, there has always been competition in nature; it does indeed set balance in nature. However, when that competition was combined with the wrong pressures and misguided power, people lose morality. The study focused on the altruistic qualities in humanistic-existential universal leaders- such as that of positive morality. Particularly in the world of education, where the focus should be 100% on the progression of each stakeholder within the building. From those learning to those teaching to those even cleaning the building. The truth was that every place on Earth was a place in the

universe. Sometimes people tended to forget that all humans lived on a planet and that outside of that planet, there has been a vast sky, and space, filled with the unknown. Educators should have strived to lead with thinking that promoted human longevity, and for that, leaders should be willing to redefine and define what humanism is, willing to study the changes in that definition, not just for the current times but for the times to come (Hobbes, 1588). Moreover, the following terms and definitions were also essential to understanding the results of this study. It was also important to understand the definition of these words for usage in further research that could derive from this study.

Academic Knowledge Skills: Standards within units as mandated by states and school districts for each subject area (Kapshuk & Alt, 2022).

Attrition: The turnover rate in school building staff due to voluntary departures such as quitting (Downey, Clandini & Shaefer, 2015).

Capital Gain: Profits from sold goods and assets and profits gained within an industry-based economy (Ashford & Curry, 2022).

Consciousness: The compiled memory, feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and ideas within the being that are based on their individual experiences (Koch, 2018).

Depth of Knowledge: The mastery of content knowledge within subject areas by an instructor and student (Boyles, 2018).

Epistemological: A form of psychology that connects cognitive behavior and natural science (Breyer, 2014).

Existential: The concept and idea that the self is connected to consciousness, free-thinking, and feeling (Gravil, 2007).

Humanistic: Thoughts, thinking, and actions focusing on the principles of human behavior (Waterman, 2013).

Interventions: Rendered support and extra help for striving students needing services (Devrim, 2015).

Leadership: Defined by John Maxwell as the ability to gain followers and/or influence, influence others (Maxwell, 2007).

Morality: An individual's values as actions, beliefs, and words within their relationships with the world and others in it (Heidt, 2008).

Relative Controlled Variables: Variables that can be directly impacted by human behavior and controlled by human behavior and decision-making (Hofstadter-Duke & Dale, 2015).

Rigor: The degree of difficulty in content/work within standard and units of subject areas when combined or applied to student depth of knowledge (Moore, 2017).

Sentient: A quality in a life form that allows and requires them to see value in relationships within the self and with others (Lan Sinhababu & Carrasco, 2022).

Stakeholder: An individual that shares the same values as others within an organization, typically placing value in relationships (Besso & Kumar, 2016).

Universal Learning Design: Instructional adaptations that allow all existing learners to develop their expressive understanding of knowledge attained and/or ability (without or despite limitations) of intelligence (Ryan-Toye, 2018).

Universal: “Is an epistemological position that asserts the ability to produce absolute knowledge about unrestricted domains of reality or at least all tokens of a certain type with an unlimited validity claim” (Krönig, 2020, p. 1).

Summary

The defined purpose of the works and result in this exploratory study were used to explore and provided insight into shared global issues related to humanistic leadership dynamics within educational organizations. In Chapter One, an overview of the problem and research was discussed along with a background description of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, limitations of the study, assumptions, and definitions. Where the overall expressive narrative was that human life is valuable, and the conditions for which to maintain education at a high level for humanity, must include the adaptation to the new demands of humanity. Meanwhile preserving, training, and maintaining educators within educational buildings. Expressed in the coming chapters were previous studies related to this study and analyzed qualitative data from willing participants. Historical findings and commonalities shared by previous studies on the topic of humanism, existentialism, and its correlation to the universal presence of mankind. The information in this study may be used as a starting point to formulate new training, teachings, and behavioral modifications within the practice of educational leadership and not limited to the future use as well of the analysis of previous failures in educational leadership theories and the development of new leadership theories that properly adapt to human changes and challenges in education. Looking deep into the foundational components in the literature of leadership meanwhile understanding the progression of active humanism within leadership roles, concerning the results of the study.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Introduction

The topic in the study focused on solidly identifying and defining critical humanistic, existential characteristics that humanistic universal educational leaders (HUEL) should have. The study took on an exploratory qualitative design and focused on identifying trends in the majority of humanistic characteristics school staff members, and stakeholders wish educational leaders would have. The study specifically examined data from three district schools, consisting of 15 educators who answered open-ended questions related to the described vetted research topic. However, the literary research included documentation on the study of humanism and leadership that date back to the first century B.C. The works of various philosophers on the topic of humanism, existentialism, and universalism were also included in this study.

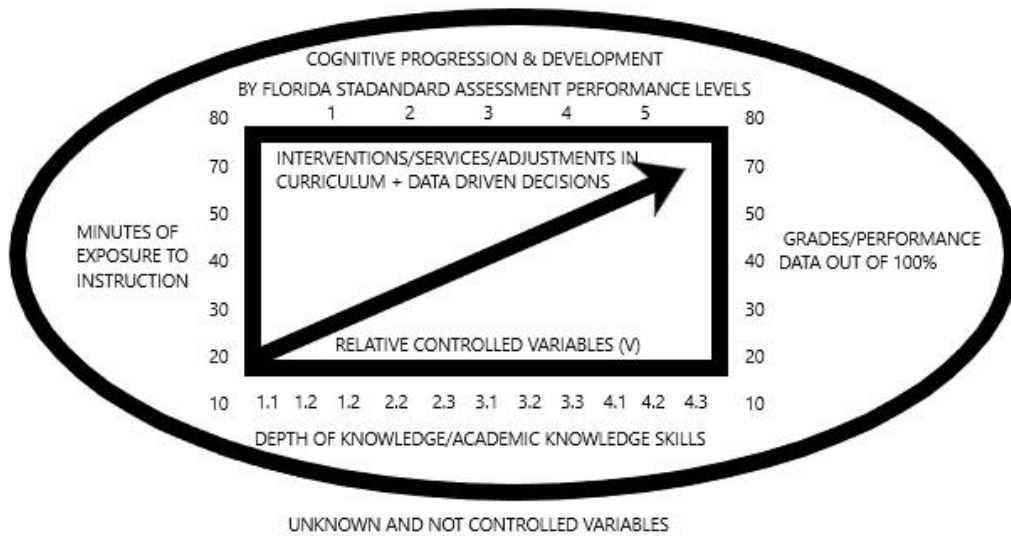
The basic components of the study focused on embedding clear definitions for humanism, leadership, existentialism, and universal learning, within the exploratory foundation of the study, along with any other associated words, wherein educators may find them in the study, dissertation, or any subsequent relative study evidence as finding. During the study, words were limited within the search to only be related to humanity, humanism, leadership, existentialism, universalism, education, attrition, and retention, with the inclusion of the word instructor as well within the limits of words. The literary review was limited only to topics and words that were included within the definitions listed in chapter one as well. Other subheadings include evidence of previous and historical research on humanism, existentialism, and universal learning. The objective was to offer an all-encompassing depiction of the current global perspective concerning each relevant subject matter and its integration within the context of leadership practice.

The impact of this study and findings included (but was not limited to) in all good faith, reflective thinking within organizational leadership of schools and districts for current and future redefinition of what was to be developed within humans; as others may be able to redefine the word leadership in generations to come. Not only to fit demand and changes but also to maintain balance in thinking and push the envelope of progression within functioning structures and employed stakeholders.

Defining the uses and needs for humanistic universal educational leaders that perform their daily tasks with ethical measures, focusing on humanity's existence, preservation, and positive progression. Developing fundamental human awareness that could be visibly seen in the progression of children/students throughout their changing and progressing grade levels (Roberts, 2010). Focusing on how educators develop every part of the curriculum, even down to the questions, for example, did the questions focus on the development and survival of humanity? Did the questions help solve world problems? Did the questions help students understand historical problems of the same caliber and mistakes/errors? Instead, the trending curriculum focused more on trivia facts like historical learning, where memorization of terms was served most. For mathematics and science, educators asked students to focus on the foundations and instead hold the problem-solving and “creative thinking” for the most advanced students. The historical studies on this topic showed that humanity has pondered it for most of its existence. However, it has not yet answered the question of purpose. However, what has been created was a never-ending wheel of productivity, where the task focused on learning for production and capital gain. Now, as the twenty-first-century roars on, humans found the more pressing issues to be complete planetary issues. Problems that capitalism nor money could solve.

Problems that thinking, innovation, ingenuity, and collaboration would need to solve. Problems that competition in the market could never solve.

Directly affecting schools, educators have the birthing labor of improving school grades. The tolling task of teaching instruction in isolation became apparent when leaders requested teachers to devise a formula within their instructional timeframe, one that can be quantified through a dichotomy: exerting control over the known while disregarding the unknown beyond the confines of the school building. In short, leaders could even place values to the varying integers, for instance, AKS = academic knowledge skills (standards), MA = minutes allotted (school year/day), V = variables (support, services, interventions, coaching, plans, lesson plans, PD, collaboration, training, coaching, parental involvement, leadership), I = students, T = teachers, L = altruistic learning growth, X = unknown/uncontrollable variables (external) – expressed as $(aks/ma) / (v*i) + (t*v) = L$. Leaders asked teachers to create the most linear of windows in time within their minutes of instruction, for the highest level of production, to achieve the highest level of performance and learning, which left little if any room for the development of the human. A visual representation of the formula expressed above could be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1*Cognitive Progression and Development*

Note. Chart and model created by E. Vitulli 2019.

Educators could press further and focus on the impact this has had on morale and how it affected attrition rates, student behaviors, and the realities of staffing schools with five counselors for 3,000 students (example given). The allocation of resources, for instance, entailed assigning a solitary nurse to attend to a student population of 2,000 and providing only one media specialist for a college encompassing 10,000 students. Districts neglected to pay professors and educators at other levels money for extensive years of service. It has been no secret as studies have shown and proven, that faculty staff members were by in-large unhappy with their low levels of compensation, and constant amounts of pressure within the demands of their supervisors in education (Oberman, 2005). States neglect to even recognize, in some districts, prior years of service because districts did not have enough money to pay them. There were a plethora of reasons why historically, educators have needed the humanistic-existential leader, but leaders must introduce the idea of universal thinking within current and future

leaders. Extrinsic motivators such as pay were important for the development of not only culture within organizations but also morale and professionalism for teachers. Further supporting reports from studies conducted on the matter, explained that extrinsic motivators included increased compensation, bonuses, paid leave time, multiple options for retirement plans, team-building opportunities outside of the workplace, discipline directives, and/or other forms of punishments (Ihensekien, 2004). The importance of maintaining human morale, the progression of education, and the development of educators were at the root core of humanistic universal existential leadership. Intrinsic motivators and extrinsic motivators were exemplified throughout interview data shared by participants in this study.

Philosophical Studies on Humanism

A study by Grouping Zhao explained how people have historically viewed themselves as existential beings and their ability to learn from others and themselves (Zhao, 2015). An essential part of Zhao's study showed the philosophical progression of the self, using Michael Foucault's early work as an example. The central idea of humanism was the simple study of the self-concerning others around us. (Foucault, 1926). Others like Thomas Hobbes went on in the *Leviathan* to mention humankind's position within the state of nature, by position within all existence as victims of their humanity and limited only to the freedoms within their minds.

It can be accredited to the Romans, the perceptive thinking of the more profound human. Scholars maintain that as early as the first century B.C. it was the Romans that began to look into the qualities of humanism, further mentioning the educated man to be separate from the savage animal, thus being different species of their own, the *homo-sapien* (Aloni, 1997). To be human, in essence, was to think deeper; this was the ideology that the Romans based their principles of educational development, from pondering, to reflection, to thinking about the future. The

position of humankind would be challenged for years as humanism would be defined and re-defined. Dr. Aloni mentioned that it was during the Renaissance that humanism took to a different way of thinking, as people began to separate themselves into a movement called the *humanists*; separating themselves from the humans that lacked universal awareness (Aloni, 1997).

Finding one's place on earth by position was where most of the thinking led. Thinking questions through the Enlightenment era pondered individual purpose on earth—moreover, the position of the altruistic man, politics, women, children, etc. However, in most cases, due to the lacking progressiveness within civil rights, the man himself was to be considered most as the rightful human to light the dark path of ignorance. Some pointed to the existence of God, others pointed to the existence of science, and few pointed to the combination of both as a plausibility. Dr. Aloni explains that during the Enlightenment era, it was difficult to differentiate one philosopher of humanistic culture from another since they each expanded similarly on the idea of humanity (Aloni, 1997).

Mankind's position has been defined as that of the vague leader and education to be attained; however, one could argue that education could be just as much of a resource as water. The ability of some people to attain education throughout the early parts of human history (and even the modern) was entirely relative to their gender, race, place of birth, and economic status. Humanism has evolved into pondering our position among the stars, which led schools to change structures within educational dichotomies. Placing a higher value on the position of humankind within the universe and setting the stage for the educational attainment of all humans, regardless of any particular, specified difference or similarity, leaders should be striving to find solutions to problems that directly affect human survival on this planet, and perhaps even space.

History of Humanism in Leadership

Rooted at the core of humanity was the idea of existence. To be bound by all extremities and internal anatomy to the earth and the cosmos. Since the beginning of humankind, humans have often searched for man's position on Earth and in space. From whence do humans originate? Do humans exist in solitude? Much of this was directly related to how people measured their existence, humanity, and intelligence. Throughout history, much of leadership has become an idea of alpha energy, combined with title, position (rank), and some attributes defined within organizational structures as most potent among other stakeholders that she or he who shall lead would always be the most valuable among everyone. The idea has been discussed by plenty of philosophers, for instance, Nietzsche, Hobbes, Foucault, Rousseau, and Locke. Primarily supporting the idea that in leadership, the value and quality of the leader were mainly defined by the actions they took, the words they used, and the humanity included within their motives (Lawler, 2005).

At first, the idea of humanism was not welcomed much in thinking. Most thought it was a liberal thought from the Enlightenment, pressing about the conditions of science to outweigh the need for spirituality or religion. However, this was not so as humanism as was instead much of a combination of thinking as limitless beings where the soul exists, and the spirit was invaluable, much different from the ideology wherein during the nineteenth century, to be a follower of the scientific method would raise suspicion from the general masses (Fassin, 2019).

Recent studies have steered beyond examining man's position on Earth and space or the state of nature where leaders may emerge naturally. Further than the debates of leaders being born or made. Educational scientists now looked into the person as a whole, attributes seen and unseen within an individual that would make them fit leaders, where the perceptions of both the

leader and the led amount to micro and macro actions near their own organizational level and/or outside of their own organization (Lawler, 2005). Leading opinion placed humanistic principles in leadership as transformational traits. No longer was it just about title and power; most evidence by studies showed that stakeholders within organizations define leadership qualities as the ability to consider the needs, wants, feelings, and complete humanity within a person in order to take actions that positively impact their morality (Fisher, 2011).

By virtue, then, the study and message in this dissertation focused on explicitly identifying the human qualities within leaders that stakeholders hope to see. Setting a culture where humanity was shared, and leaders were not seen as higher beings, but instead as equal in humanity, willing to motivate and endure as they cultivate other leaders within the organization. In education and all organizations, leaders could function in altruistic humanism, which could be understood as the ability to reflect and be willing to take into account the morality of their own actions as leaders and the impact of those actions on the morality of those led (D'Orville, 2015). Supporting the idea that humans were responsible for nurturing the world and the universe for future generations (Zhao, 2015).

Universal Learning and Leadership

Leaders must understand the realities of progression, though humans lived in a world where technology mostly leads the way. Modifications in education, such as the implementation of long-distance learning, have now started to impact even the high school curriculum. Educators must not close ties with rooted humanity. Leaders must be willing to understand that humans have always been universal beings and that humanism contained fundamental components of morality that helped maintain the concept of the self as an actual, living, universal being (D'Orville, 2015). As times changed and demands changed, the infrastructures of society would

require different mandates. For instance, once again, the progression of technology seemed to be the leading functional measurement tool by which people define themselves as existential, intelligent beings within the universe.

However, what then of the self, what then of thought, and human intelligence that was not defined as developments of technology? In education, leaders must continue to value human thought that was not solely aligned with those who can, for example, code or pass the ACT with perfect scores. Educators must be willing to dig deeper as leaders to support universal learning and leadership because the movement of technology, changes in modern life, and social progression have often miss interpreted the worth of the human (Svetelj, 2014). Classrooms and schools are reflective spaces of society, in which humans could predictively look into the future from the results and changes within them.

Educators have, in essence, shaped the entire world, as schools strive to teach each breathing soul and mind. Full hearts sat at each desk and table, and educators must focus on how humanism has allowed humans to understand the self and each other, uniting them through similar characteristics, shared as universal beings, shared as one race (Svetelj, 2014). As leaders, educators must find different ways to develop new definitions of intelligence while finding new ways to reach students with specific and undefined needs. History has shown that as generations changed, so have the demands of capital economies, but the human value should not be confused with any misguided definition of human capital. The reality in education was that the universal design was first introduced into schools and classrooms to effectively include students with special needs (Ryan & Toye, 2018). Current studies supported the idea that leaders should strive to find themselves thinking about learners within a universal realm, not just to meet the demands of capitalistic earth.

Quality and access were some of the most arguable terms for universal learning and its design. At what level have educators held the line of responsibility in developing minds and leaders? Leaders held the line of responsibility, in quality training, teaching, and access to content and curriculum, not to mention resources. For instance, take by case a hypothetical scenario, a human in a less developed nation, with little to no access to clean water or any food, might (by assumption) not have the same access to education as even the poorest human in a developed nation. Many could think that exposure to leadership principles, shadow walks, internships, and sign-off sheets that say leaders were there observing, learning – could be a great start to developing leaders. When it came to students, educators often thought, well, districts cared because they provided different modalities of expressive thinking and learning, where the curriculum may be digital, and schools hired highly qualified, certified teachers. However, this continued to fall short for some reason, as scores throughout the country (in the case of the United States) were hard-pressed to reach proficiency.

Despite efforts to release learning through “universal” means, according to the National Science Foundation, proficiency scores from 1990 to 2013 did indeed rise for the following demographics, African-American, American Indian, Hispanic, and White. However, none of the groups mentioned reached proficiency (a score of 300) on eight grade mathematics and science performance tests. In fact, in the 23 years of testing, African-American students only went up 29 points towards proficiency on the eighth-grade mathematics and science performance tests (National Science Foundation, 2013).

Bringing it into light, perhaps educators should re-think current methods and focus more on developing humans to think beyond acquiring content. The memorization of facts and vocabulary persists as an arduous requirement throughout the educational journey, from third

grade to the final year of high school. Students were often over-tested, and teachers were overworked and hard to find. Most people were indeed leaving education, and yet in many ways, believe schools were teaching to the universal design.

Research conducted by Ed Weekly in March 2021 surveyed 700 teachers and 300 administrators nationwide online with the following questions: what is the likelihood that you will leave teaching in the next two years? Thirty-three percent answered very likely, and 21% said somewhat likely (Loewus, 2021). To think, for a second, that the future of education was not in peril, was individually an opinion when the facts all pointed towards significant reforms needed, from curriculum structure to hiring qualifications to administrative training. Nevertheless, nothing screamed the need for more attention and reform, than the request for better treatment and humanity. Educators have focused most on performance in so many ways, showing the ability to retain information that they have perhaps forgotten to develop the person's depth and the thinking behind the pencil or computer screen.

Humanism in Education

Learning can be a lifelong practice. In terms of methodology, a lot has changed since the beginning of humankind. Partially, some support that schools must caution against predetermined learning and teaching, which typically understands that education serves as a way to implement changes and achievements that have often been pre-determined (Kakkori & Huttunen, 2012). Most of the standing research about humanism in education called for leaders to modify instruction in ways that pushed the limitations of learning and supported the needs of learners to breakthrough limitations. One of the most alarming ideologies that contradicted humanism in education is that man just existed without purpose - contrary to most faiths. The ideologies that contradicted humanism typically placed little value on humans and expanded on

the theories that mankind was not created by anything, therefore lacking value (Kakkori & Huttunen, 2012). Such thinking is detrimental to human existence and ideal for capital gain. Thus taking away any position of humanity within education and replacing it with technology as not only the teacher but also the learner, humans just being the vessels. Hopefully, educators could reach a time where schools steered away from the old historical thinking that places humanism in a box where schools only focused on the being as a pillar for conformity or continuity, and instead, teachers could press for innovation of the unseen (Robert, 2001).

The more pressing position of humanism in education went further than magnifying the value of each human in each seat. Sadly, as the world turned, it has become clear that capitalism has scorched most of the planet of resources, left many parts of the world underdeveloped and behind due to their inability to compete in a global market (Cole, 2006). Focusing on the progression of production, in turn, placed a giant stress on the current state of education, limiting learning to only the needs of capital demands. Most research on humanism stated that it is never too early to teach humans the meaning of being human and the purpose of preserving life and the being (Parrish, 2010). Establishing a line drawn to anyone that dictates argument towards the ideology that the self was to be only actualized when grown as a whole adult.

As political statutes continue to shift, it has become increasingly clear that educating every student within the public school system has become impossible. Schools often fight to staff their building with limited resources and provide adequate student support and services. There was a fundamental lacking humanity in a system that placed pressure to meet demands for all students but failed to properly support schools in meeting their needs. Some studies supported that public school teachers were often in a battle to prove value in their own teaching, within

their own schools, in comparison to private school teachers, where the parents could choose as the school for their child (Cole, 2006).

Some would argue that humanism has been very much alive as politicians continue to pass laws that support protecting all students of gender, sex, and religious faith. However, there was widespread support for the idea that humanism in education was exemplified, for instance, in the following pressing thought process: that the thinking human being within the buildings, gain and attain a higher level of self-awareness and existence concerning the world around them through education (Soudien, 2018). Humanism in education went beyond finding new methods of expressive human intelligence or placing greater value on the human being; the idea is that educational leaders ought to awaken humans into thinking about their current position on earth. By rousing individuals to contemplate their position within the vast expanse of the universe and pondering how forthcoming challenges shall be overcome, the aim is to ensure the endurance of human life.

In the realm of existential perspective, the attribution of significance to human life is widely believed to commence within the classroom setting. Schools were by far some of the most consistent places in the lives of human beings. With set schedules, rules, and procedures. Sometimes even more consistent than their own homes. Therefore, as educators develop humans, schools must teach them the value of humanity, not just the value of productivity or rewarded success. Schools must be able to develop humanistic thinkers.

Likewise, leaders must again consider what reasons may drive teachers and administrators out of the profession. National research that has already been conducted in March of 2021 by Education Weekly showed that most teachers and administrators differ in thinking, and in some responses through the surveyed data, some teachers even mention the lack of

humanity in leaders (Loewus, 2021). Alarming qualitative research results showed that some teachers' comments mention that administrators simply take them as chaotic and dramatic stakeholders (Loewus, 2021). The magnitude of comments like these can be multiplied as many hypothetical times over, but the reality is that schools were now a world that demanded most of teachers and students but less of politicians and professional athletes, for example. Though treatment and morale could be subjective to opinion, statistics in a 2019 research of 282 teachers conducted in Italy contained results such as teacher's happiness at work was tied directly to their wellbeing and health (Benevene et al., 2019).

Bringing then into question efforts to train administrators and to maintain stakeholders within the building that could effectively service the needs of students and teachers throughout the academic years. Something that, most likely, points at funding as an obstacle and liability as an ethical hurdle. Humanism in education called for all efforts from all branches of educational support to maintain and provide progressive movements and development in all areas of education for all stakeholders involved. Most educators would all agree that education is one of the most essential human dynamics and is directly tied to the human race's longevity, prosperity, and survival.

Humanism in education must also place a limit on the implementation of technology as an aid, instead of a dependency that could render human involvement obsolete even to the learner. The possibilities of tomorrow were unforeseen in terms of accuracy, but this exploratory study aimed to focus on the possibilities perceived by current and past educators. Perhaps, in hopes to warn and illuminate issues that could be faced by the educational leaders of tomorrow. Yet, it is not only the educational leader or instructor that could face what challenges may come in education but also the learner. Which in turn places importance on the value of the human in

comparison to the strategy, or program used with the improvements and developments of technologies worldwide. It was, imperative to maintain the human at the center of the progressive movement of education. To allow the human to develop ideas that could solve human problems, global problems, and planetary problems. If educators and systems were to use the aid of artificial intelligence, it should behoove them to use such components and programs with limitations that aid humanity and not replace it. Similarly, in terms of treatment, development, and progression, the managing of educators, development, training, and retention should be kept at the signing pen of educational leaders to maintain positive progression for the human learner as well.

Humanism and Existentialism in Leadership

With the current depletion of resources on earth, it has also become increasingly evident that educational leadership should reach beyond the current position of the self within the bounds of humanity. Leaders must be willing to dig deep within the instructional curriculum to help the current and future generations understand how life has progressed. Once upon a time, oil had hundreds and thousands of years of use left, and clean water was primarily accessible to most of the free world. Students should understand that never before today, has humanity seen such a decline in the quality of life for the majority of humanity as a whole – globally (Soudien, 2018). While historical academic opinion supported the idea of supporting the development of all students to meet standardized needs, current study results showed that schools should support the development of humans to hone their ability to preserve existence.

History showed that despite efforts to support No Child Left Behind and structure lessons into a completely concrete plan, the results for defined current achievement were hardly met. Evidence from recent academic publishing showed that schools must not create a curriculum that

lacks flexibility, or curriculum that lacks any room for creativity, which often denies the human of developing deeper parts of the self (Zucca-Scott, 2010). Creating a sense of connection with the students as existential humans beyond the grades and test scores.

While some educational leaders neglect ethical reform, it has been ethics that kept boundaries between the administrator and the instructor, though one could agree that even with ethics included, further boundaries were always needed for healthier relationships. However, popular opinion is shared in the idea that high-performing teachers, do share a common trait: they display the ability to connect on a humanistic level (Zucca-Scott, 2010). While most teachers would argue that time is constricted to milliseconds where humanity can be seen in any existence because curriculum often prevented the human from developing beyond the needs of the benchmark and left little room for changes beyond mandated benchmarks (Zucca-Scott, 2010).

Humanistic leaders should also understand that support was primarily defined as internal and external components that varied in terms of demand from one human to the next (Long, 2017). Schools often dealt with students getting extensive support from big pharma and human replacement in education as new technology has been used to deliver content with higher frequency. Meanwhile medicating the student as needed with the excuse that it allowed for more support in service to the student. Humans still needed contact/engagement with one another, in order to exist and develop, particularly children (students).

Even in staff meetings and development, trainings are delivered more often through recorded videos or virtual training. Where leaders push a button, send an email, and staff members complete the training through a detached, virtual template. Leaving behind authenticity and fidelity at times. Anyone could sit and watch a video once and take an untimed quiz 30 times

until they guess the correct answers. Educators should not be trained to think that concepts such as mass training and mass testing were the core of existential-humanistic leadership.

Furthermore, the same happens in classrooms; many academics support the idea that lacking leadership continues to leave humanity out of daily interaction with technology, where schools found that technology mimics the representation of real life, yet it fails to provide the human with the true experience of actual life in its altruistic totality (Long, 2017, p. 180). Other claims examined the leader's behavior by measuring the depth of impact. Districts could develop leaders to motivate, awaken thought, and place reverence on human life. However, much more is to be said for striving leaders, as humanism in schools often focused on merging the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of the being (Karmini et al., 2021).

Another component of humanism and existentialism in leadership was the perception of evaluations and supervision. Power, inherently, is either earned, taken, or given. By title, power is completely given as a hierarchy in the chain of commands within education. Making it hard for teachers to have open conversations with assistant principals and other managers. Risking the possibility of being reported for saying the wrong thing. How could people co-exist altruistically as humans in an environment entirely controlled by governmental ethics? Most of the time, people hid. People tended to push away true humanity to show their professional selves, the accepted perceptive version of themselves. Teachers and school leaders could never, in most cases, be themselves at work, let alone with their subordinates and co-workers. Perhaps not only to admire a family picture or share a story during a team-building outing. In reality, people hardly got to exist in their workplace as humans, which often led to considerable influencing trauma within evaluative measures. For instance, systems within organizations usually held a

responsibility to maintain integrity at a high level in order to maintain a high level of morality and deter corruption through a form of centralized power (De Lissovoy, 2015).

Nevertheless, what happened when the dynamics of humanity and power are not balanced? What was mainly seen was corruption, abuse, and mistreatment. In those instances, there was no humanity within any existential bounds. It was simply as barbaric of a playing field as one would find in the wild world of animals. Alphas were constantly at work with no regard for preserving progression but instead for self-adulation and prosperity.

Thus, perspective landed at the basic foundation of the existential educator and leader, once defined as those rejecting the ideology that within every human there existed good nature and good intentions. More so than the need for power and the need for title within organizations (Aloni, 1997) Where recently there has been a need to change the perspective of the educational leader to be, redefined as open-minded leaders, willing to challenge the current framework of education. Currently, educators found themselves in a world where the theoretic ideas behind the dichotomy of education was to create beings that produce and enhance the productivity of economies (Roberts, 2010). The same could be said about what education has done to students and their families. The pressures to fit into the economic machine and sustain world economies have far outweighed humanity's value.

The focus of the study hoped to find, through exploratory research, answers that help us define the areas of needs as well as where the humanistic-existential leader can serve most and best in education. Qualitative data and feedback from expert teachers, new teachers, students, and stakeholders would most effectively define these needs. As educators understand one of the most present and alarming truths, included the ideology that the job of the educator was to simply create a curriculum that met the needs of capitalism and developed humans that would be

an extension of each nation's growth in capital gains (Roberts, 2010). Detrimental in thinking and progress, which jeopardized actual existence, placing humans directly in a race for resources in a capitalist world. Not saying that capital was not significant, but explaining that governments have, in the majority, allowed corporations and multinational hegemony to be owned by a large conglomerate of rich knowns and unknowns, both through public and private corporations and investment companies. The truth was evident in all economic reports that the one percent of the world's richest control most of the impacting principles pressing world economies. For instance, BlackRock has become one of the world's largest companies, so large that it has been able to effectively influence political changes and the creation of policies worldwide (Ungarino, 2022).

Where did this place the current need for humanistic-existential leaders? Districts must not confuse such leadership as one that strived to push for professional developments that get along, Canvas training that ended with an exit ticket, or extended norms that merely allow us to accept each other's differences. The purpose of this rhetoric was to impact fully and directly, and there needed to be a complete re-structure of academic focus, where educators placed value on developing the human, not just human production. Where past philosophers have mentioned pursuing happiness, leaders hope to find the unmentioned. Similar studies found through extensive research the needed qualities from humans sought out in other humans they have as leaders. Specifically, those individuals were working daily within school buildings and school districts.

Human leaders may be tasked with a tall order to meet the demands of tomorrow's humans. Yet one thing was for certain, it would behoove for developments of the educational leader to focus on honing the best positive attributes of humanity to be passed on as not only survival components of humanity but for the preserving of humanity and longevity of humanity.

Creating and supporting a curriculum that promoted solutions for real-world problems and a curriculum that serviced human needs. Curriculum that allowed for the progression of humanity outside the bounds of systematic components of working (employed) society.

Universal Leadership Qualities

Qualities of the universal leader should press the being to exist far beyond the needs of humankind. Perhaps it sounded impossible, but one could argue that thinking is limited to problems humanity is yet to foresee as a race. The advancement of education should also endeavor to explore solutions that address the challenges faced by future generations. As leaders, conducting themselves with humanity is honestly not enough. It should be a minimal requirement, not a surprising expectation that any leaders sharing humanistic views would strive to maintain the value of the human at a high level, with integrity and morality (Nilsson & Jost, 2020). Specifically identified by educators like Lance Wright, Universal Leaders possessed the following qualities: vision creators, able to get others to follow, effective communicators, results-oriented, team players, and can handle change (Wright, 2009). However, this seemed to be minimal as an expectancy for what the term universal leader should stand for. Other educational leaders in academia mentioned universal leadership as a mere consensus of leadership traits to be agreed upon as blanket general qualities.

Likewise, there were other lukewarm definitions of universal leadership, which once again aligned leadership to minimalistic requirements, which arguably, have yet to meet the bar of expectations in results. If not, districts would have performing schools, for instance, everywhere, with happier staff members and stakeholders. For instance, take what has been known as the eight universal laws of leadership. Where educators found the following characteristics to be "universal" as demands: put yourself last, think of the company first, and

evaluate what you can do for the organization far more than what the organization could do for you (Wright, 2009). All apparent factors would support one juggernaut of an economic lymphatic node. An alternative option would be to display an additional motivational factory poster on the wall or engage in video training or participate in a canvas course that concludes with a quiz. Somehow, this did not seem to meet the definition of universal, for it seemed earthly by natural needs for economic competition, and only magnified by the fact that to date, there has not been any research that could connect organizational leadership to universal qualities that could perhaps be shared by the existentially aware human (Jones, 2014).

The work in this dissertation has shown the definite qualities of a universal leader. Those, which mostly were longed for and favored by other stakeholders, and those yet not established on a true universal spectrum beyond the scope of earthly demands. Current study results showed that universal leaders should feel a sense of responsibility for the future beyond the current capabilities of human technology or thinking. Progression was, at times, a thing for the pioneers, brave souls that wish to understand not only the ever-changing position of life on earth but also the existence of earthy life compared to the boundless universe. Developing thinking that is far beyond right-winged or left-winged values.

Humanistic leaders have, for what seems like forever, focused on developing people that could solve problems in a linear, human-to-human manner (Green, 2009). However, the universal leader should possess qualities that allow them to look at perspectives within the human that relate to their existential limitation or lack thereof among the stars. Issues such as color, gender, and sex would most likely not be necessary as an identifiable difference concerning human's actual position in space and what humans know about themselves and space. The significance in terms of leadership as responsible universal beings.

As universal leaders in education, many districts have not progressed much in terms of posthumanism. In many ways, some would argue that education has yet to reach humanistic leadership. Educators have been stuck in the ideology that teachers must teach each student according to their needs, yes, but as long as the needs do not overlap the demands of standardized testing (with accommodations, of course). Antiquated thinking would support that education was often modified to meet the ever-changing demands of surrounding economies (Ivanova et al., 2017). Universal qualities in a leader would also not support a socialist and utopian ideology of humanism, where the human self is the knower, and all else is animal. Where academic humanism supports the idea of the ever-learning human (Sanbonmatsu, 2007).

Universal leaders should push learners and stakeholders for creativity and to think about impact and influence beyond their localities (though that is important). The current issues humans face on earthly soil require the thinking of people that do not oppress thinking and learning to mere numbers. While those foundations were required and essential as established human methods of intelligent communication, humans were not yet aware of the subjects about which they have not allowed themselves to inquire or explore. This exploratory qualitative study focused on finding the qualities of universal leaders that allowed humanity to consider intelligence that has not been evaluated yet, for instance, ways that students with disabilities can communicate and express thinking and learning. Among other means of expressions and evaluations of intelligence and knowledge aside from standardized testing, placing into practice the idea that humans should engage in lifetime learning, developing themselves in ways that harbor creativity (Włodzimierz & Bankowski, 2000).

Moreover, universal leaders should possess qualities that allow humans to understand not only their world but also how language and the information they have learned apply to the

possibilities of multidimensionality in other worlds (Roberts, 2000). Much can be argued by anyone of science and faith that there may not be possibilities of such worlds, but what then of heaven and what then of hell, for instance? Not to say that educators should discuss such parameters individually with students and employees, but that schools should allow humans within or outside organizational buildings to explore and understand such dimensional possibilities as existential beings. Even in normal conversation, it transfers energy from genuine and authentic, which most current research pushes for (the authentic leader).

One cannot be authentic without humanity; leaders cannot hide behind ethics and think that the people they work for or those who work for them see past perceptions. The works in this dissertation placed focus on research that qualitatively showed supporting evidence for the need for universal leaders and their clearly defined qualities. Measuring with coded abbreviations for each quality as information was gathered from multiple volunteering humans as the primary focus of subjects in research. For the purpose of tracking trending emotions and thoughts. Universal leaders should possess the ability and understanding to challenge what may look to be working but also ignite the capacity to create within others (Burke, 2018).

Universal leaders should also possess the quality of spirituality. Not in the sense that they should be religious or speak about religion in places they cannot, but instead stretch beyond the authenticities of care. Some academic study results also showed the need for universal leaders, as stakeholders seek spiritual motivation. In essence, spiritual leadership can be turned or flipped as an argument for religion, but the reality is that a leader does not need to be deeply religious or spiritual to help others develop spirituality (Williams, 2015). Instead, the conceptual idea was that the leader effectively manifests motivation intrinsically with and through other stakeholders – impacting their spirit and motivating the souls of educators. Something that is often lacking in

education at the moment, as schools pass on intervention programs sanctioned by districts that can only afford what they define to be the best within the state-approved choices.

There was an importance to be placed on the acknowledgment of impact for generations to come. Leaving capitalistic measures in the backseat of test building and assessment formulation. Focusing more on the conceptual problems that humanity faces in surviving realities. For example, the fact that most of the world's plastic trash could be wrapped around the moon a total of 5,790 times (Parker, 2018). Universal Leaders should focus on developing the awareness of living and developing an educational curriculum with plausible solutions for problems that may seem possible and impossible to solve in humanity's foreseeable and unforeseeable future. Less focus on the cost of oil and more focus on the solution for what humans could use if Earth runs out of oil, which could also be accessible on planet Earth and the human race. However utopian that sounds, the reality was that educators should develop an awareness of what was needed overall throughout the earth as a human race, instead of segmented needs based on variables often detached from the actual human being (Roberts, 2010).

Perhaps, progressive leaders such as those proposed by the HUEL Study could hope to one-day lead education into the unknown. Helping support and build the ever-changing human meanwhile adjusting to the ever-changing times. The demands of the universal leader go beyond the horizons of capital demands. The task was to help humanity, literally, at times save humanity. To, once again, solve problems that may not have solutions yet. To develop educational buildings where leaders did not just celebrate the arts and the expressive modalities of intelligence, often oppressed by hardline, flat-line curriculum. Instead, by creating buildings

where people developed into the best versions of themselves. With aspirations to be problem solvers for the planet and humanity, not just for big pharma and Wall Street.

Compassion has required humility in the shared suffering of humanity, where leaders understand that title means nothing outside of the walls of the earth. Perhaps allowing schools to focus more on developing all of the human senses while understanding how past information could shape our future. After all, learning the intellectual, existential, and universal qualities of the human should be at the core of all developments in the realm of education (Aloni, 1997). As districts filled their classrooms with qualified educators, schools must begin to sharpen what fits the current need of humanity; what, in essence, makes a good teacher today? Is it who they are as a person, their manners, and/or other characteristics, which make most often, showed their humanity? (Roberts, 2010). All factors that seemed and sounded human to most relative of behavioral comparisons. Therefore, if the idea was that leaders hire better humans that sounds wrong to think and say in itself. The idea was that leaders hire rooted humans. The idea was that leaders train rooted humans. The idea was that leaders develop deeply rooted humans. Educators should ask themselves—"rooted in what?" That was what this study sought to find through its research; that was what has yet to be accurately defined in the past.

Educators should strive to answer that the humans placed in schools and classrooms to help mold future humans are aware of their existence, their position within the universe, their power, their hopes, and their thinking and decision. Supporting existential thinking that humans have always been exceptionally rooted in the universe's strings and understand their place among the stars, unlike other living creatures. Now this has been much harder to find than a teacher certified in exceptional education KG-6th as well as reading endorsed and perhaps earth and space science certified 5th through 9th grade (example only).

However, one could say it is worth the attempt, worth every living effort in a world where the current standing is that many places can hardly find clean water for most of the world's population. In addition, the fact that most of the foods consumed were processed leads to cancer, and modern medicine still does not have a definite cure for cancer.

More alarming as well were other global problems that continue to lead to pandemics and the depletion of the ozone layer. As the world turns and time races forward, humanity cannot stay behind in the antiquated thinking that has educated society since the end of World War II. Schools must seek innovation and adaptation. Leaders must fill the classes with hearts and minds that can effectively relate any content to the shared sufferings of humankind.

Summary

Chapter Two reviewed the literature, which included current and historical definitions of humanism, universalism, existentialism, and leadership. Connecting each to the current state of education on a global spectrum and its relation to the study. Chapter Two also reviewed current and historical instructional dichotomy and leadership strategies used. Chapter Two also included information on philosophical studies on humanism and humanism in education, humanism, and existentialism in leadership, ending with the qualities studied and defined up to date in universal leaders. Chapter Two provides historical background to the foundational framework of the study, but it also provided a reason for the study and supported the purpose of the study.

Touching on the importance of humanism within educational buildings, but also the importance of humanism between one human and another. Placing importance on universalism, not as a utopian form of thought or political alignment in thinking, but instead as a starting point in terms of awareness, where the human should understand that existence is real and the position of our existence within the cosmos created by God has forever been - very real. Chapter Two

also places importance on the magnitude of human actions and the impact of education on human behaviors.

Chapter Two continued to illuminate the needed attributes of leadership and educational leadership and the developments of leadership. Chapter Two also focused on clarifying the importance of the preservation of all human components within the confines of educational buildings, and curriculums. Chapter Two expressed the possible impacts of the study in relation to districts and their ability to develop trainings in the future for educators at all levels. Chapter Two serves as a staple for the significance of the study and possible application of the study to future research. Looking to make a connection with the final chapter of the study report through its literary findings. Meanwhile establishing the proper literary foundation necessary for the explanation connection of the procedures and methodology within the study.

Chapter Three

Procedures and Methodology

Introduction

For this exploratory qualitative research study, living experiences from random and willing participants ($N = 15$) were gathered and compiled through ethical interviews. Participants in this study were employees of public schools. During the participant selection process, a survey composed of questions allowed the random selection of qualified participants, as shown in Appendix D. Given that teaching and learning are some of the oldest human traditions, the study proposed searching for the deepest, most altruistic answers from genuine educators. Allowing the educators to understand that they not only have a voice but that other educators are searching for progression in the field, specifically for better educational leaders. The study focused on finding the most personal qualities educators wished to see in their leaders. The methodology of the study-explored solutions for current problems seen in education, specifically in the high turnover of leaders within education, many of them leaving the field, and many leading schools with a high number of grievances and/or lawsuits from their staff members. Assistant principals and principals leave the profession just as much as the instructional staff. This study stands on experiences shared by educators (which may be overlooked at times and hardly shared) shedding light on why teachers were leaving the profession and why “principals who showed signs of burnout—losing enthusiasm for their work, feeling overly stressed or exhausted—were more likely to quit the profession entirely” (Sparks, 2023, p. 1).

Research Method and Paradigmatic Perspective

The research question in this study focused on finding true genuine answers. Open-ended questions allowed each answer in this study to show experiences shared, within comfort.

Expanding on what some educators have enjoyed, suffered, and endured during their careers. Staying close to the methodology in exploratory qualitative research, allowing thought to expand on answers. The methodology focused on exploring samples from an array of experiences and years in education and searching for answers to each question that brought out the most honesty. In particular and specifically, the questions related to educational leaders regarding the qualities they currently see in educators and the ones they wish to see in future educators. The research questions in this study also focused on finding the current problems in education (according to educators) to perhaps allow leaders of today and the future to have some insight into what current educators see as a problem and what they may foresee as a problem.

Qualitative Research Approach

The frequency of qualities expressed within interviews was attached to codes that align specifically with the defined qualities of leaders and shared trending problems, wants, and needs in education. The frequency of use of each quality and need was used to weigh the severity of each component and provide specificity in the definition for each particular component. Each interview was recorded through audio recording devices, such as iPhone speakers, handwritten accounts, and audio recording through a Dell Latitude 5140 computer (laptop). During the audio and written portion of each interview recording, participants were asked to state their names, dates, and time and asked if they were willing, with a sound mind and full faith, to be a living part of this research study. The qualitative data from exploratory findings was composed only of the interview statements, stories, and words used by the participants included in the interview sampling pool. Survey data for candidate screening was composed through the word as a document that was printed and distributed to participants as a random survey template.

The experiences shared served as the data points used to report the findings within the study. The approach to using qualitative measures was chosen with the belief that it would provide deeper insight into the actual lives of educators. Since the nature of the research questions, focused on finding the wants and needs of individuals, it was important to provide more than qualitative feedback as perhaps quick made selections on a survey. The ideology behind choosing the exploratory qualitative method was to provide a depth of knowledge for educational leaders, as to what educators are living, feeling, wanting, and/or needing.

Exploratory Approach

Participants were respected in all ethical terms of privacy and consent. Interviews were not conducted until all items were vetted and approved by the IRB and professors on board for the doctoral department at the University of The Cumberland. The study focused on the following 10 questions during interviews (which were recorded) and lasted no longer than 45 minutes each (see Table 1). Furthermore, the interviews consisted of 15 individual interviews at the employed site of each participant. Interview questions used to answer research question number one were numbers one through five. The development of the interview question map in Table 1, was to provide evidence through elaborative, open-ended answers to the two main research questions in the study. Moreover, the development of the interview question map provided organization, quality, and balance to the use of the interview questions in support of the two research questions. The interview guide also took away the chance of repetition, as the use of the questions had to be itemized and discussed in its entirety as a separate sub-question with the participant. Moreover, the interview questions in Table 1, provided an opportunity for the participant to expand on their answers by providing reasoning to their thoughts, emotions, feelings, etc. The main objective and purpose for the use and development of the interview

question map was to provide depth within the exploratory findings of the study. Furthermore, the interview questions used to answer research question one were 1 through 5 and for research question number two, the interview questions used were six through 10, however, question 10 does support both of the research questions, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Interview Question Guide

Interview Questions	Research Question
1. Give examples of qualities you wish to see in educational leaders.	1
2. Describe what humanism means to you.	1
3. Give examples of what existential means to you.	1
4. How can education leaders create a high level of impact?	1
5. What has led to teacher attrition?	1
6. What keeps you in education?	2
7. What qualities do you currently see in educational leaders?	2
8. What are the current problems you see in education?	2
9. What problems do you foresee in the future of education?	2
10. How can educational leaders solve the current and future problems in education?	1&2

Interviewed participants were unaware of these questions before the sampling interview, which allowed for organic answers to develop in honest expression within a natural setting. All participants could answer each question without difficulty and with comfort to their truth in experiences. Brief periods of silence were allotted to each participant as a reflective period after questions so they could thoughtfully and fully answer to the best of their ability.

The idea behind the exploratory approach was to maintain an open mind both for the participant and the study throughout the process. Looking with purpose but decreasing limitations of the study. Being that the pool of interviewed participants was only fifteen, the

exploratory approach focused on shedding light on the true stories of the participants, to be shared not only with the most accuracy but also with the purpose of relativity to the reader and other past, current and future educators reading the reported findings. Since the study focused primarily on the humanistic components of the educator, it was important to maintain the awareness of the existential self throughout the exploratory study, meanwhile making it a point to present the human as an existential being that was not only limited to planetary presence but also universal presence. With that in mind, it was essential throughout the study to then express the need for humanistic universal existential leaders.

Role of The Researcher

The researcher was responsible for building the framework of the study and building the questions that would be accepted by the IRB for the study. The researcher also was responsible for developing the exploratory methodology of the research and its qualitative approach. Moreover, the researcher was responsible for developing the literacy review and all components of the study which included screening, selecting, and interviewing participants. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and typed into Word documents, one for each participant, concerning answers to each posed research question and tracking frequently used words. The foundations of exploratory qualitative research in this study allow participants to share their real-life experiences, where the “EDQ approach is also recognized, [for] allowing researchers to be creative in their thinking” (Hunter et al., 2019, p. 1) Consequently, the methodology process allowed the researcher to report trends and values aligned with the altruistic qualities deemed essential in both present and future humanistic-existential universal leaders (HUEL). Therefore, allowing the report to have efficacy and depth, aligning definitions of past words, theories, qualities, and beliefs to match future re-definitions or newly identified qualities as important

behaviors in educational leaders. The researcher's role in this study was to report the truth, not just translate perspective and provide insight. The researcher was responsible for maintaining any bias outside of the report and developing a study that would allow the participants to tell their stories, if not for (in this case) studying, to allow the participants to share their wants and needs within education. The following steps were taken by the researcher to establish the foundation of the study and to finalize the report of the study:

1. The researcher was responsible for developing a study that would address a world phenomenon.
2. The researcher was responsible for developing questions that would help address the phenomenon. The questions would need to be vetted and approved by the IRB.
3. The researcher was responsible for taking IRB courses that would explain the importance of ethical research, ethical reporting, and the importance of maintaining safety with respect for humanity throughout the study.
4. The researcher was responsible for researching and developing the methodology of the study.
5. Moreover, the researcher was responsible for attaining all proper permissions for research from participating districts.
6. The role of the researcher also included the ethical recruitment and selection of willing participants for the study.
7. The role of the researcher was to also included selecting an ethical and proper method of theoretical framework meanwhile developing research components within the study for data sampling.
8. The researcher (in this case) also was responsible for conducting the interviews.

9. The researcher was also responsible for transcribing the information collected from the interviews into a report.

10. The researcher was also responsible for maintaining all required documentation from the interview, meanwhile abiding by all requirements from the IRB and the University of The Cumberlands as it pertains to information-sharing restrictions.

Furthermore, the role of the researcher was also to maintain fluidity throughout the interview by providing open-ended questions that support exploratory qualitative descriptive methodology in measure. Participant trust and openness were an objective focus throughout the interview process to maintain validity and fidelity in the stories shared by the participant. Allowing the reported content to be relative to any breathing humans.

Sampling Procedures and Data Collection Sources

Sampling procedures included the use of timed interviews. Where each interview ranged from 15 to 45 minutes in length. The responses to the posed questions were meticulously documented, monitored, and transcribed. None of the interviews were visually recorded, but the information from the interviews was instead recorded digitally in typed Word documents and audibly through a recording application. Data collection sources were current and previous educators of active school buildings within the approved districts for research for this study. There were limitations placed on times, but no limitations placed on the number of shared examples and/or thoughts during the allotted time for each of the questions asked. This allowed for deeper open-ended questions and the sharing of unlimited information within the allotted interview times.

Data collection was conducted through auditory and written recordings of the interview in English. The written recording of the interview was completed through a Microsoft Word

document. The document contained only transcribed data from the interview, and each participant had a document for their interview, the document was not kept by the participant before, during, or after the interview, it was in possession of the individual conducting the study at all times during the process of the study sampling. Collection sources for the auditory portion of the data were completed through a plain recorder application and the files were deleted upon playback during the portion of the collection where the individual conducting the study checked for accuracy of transcription. Sampling occurred during non-working hours for the participants and the location of each interview was a private room, at the work location of each participant, with no other witnesses besides the individual conducting the study and the participant alone.

Research Lens

In order to preserve the exploratory nature of the study, it was important to conduct first-person interviews, expressing life from a first-hand point of view. The nature of the interviews allowed for a deep level of conversation where exploratory findings happened organically within the framework of the research. In order to maintain fidelity, no identifiable information was shared from the conducted research. Experiences shared came from educators just entering into education, to educators well into their careers or retired. Experiences shared were only shared if relative to the study questions or if they pertained to the qualities of leaders. Allowing the study to show the truth in its overall message from the provided information from all sample points taken. Giving first-hand insight into relative, real-life experiences that directly impacted humanity. The research lens focused on the studying of individual careers, individual test scores, classroom procedures, strategies used, school climates/cultures, hiring rates, attrition rates, proficiency scores, performance scores, etc. The focus lens of the study focused on the current wants and needs of stakeholders within educational buildings employed by school districts, as

well as past, present, and future problems/challenges faced and to be faced by educators within the field of education. Moreover, the research lens was developed in order to create a window view into the minds, hearts, souls, and lives of educators.

Upon district, site, and IRB approval, a mass invitation was sent via email to in-building staff members, opening up participatory interest to everyone within the building that was an educational stakeholder (not a child/not a parent). Interested candidates were invited to participate in a (private, anonymous) random pool survey. The surveys were conducted in accordance with the principal's discretion, typically in their media center or auditorium. Interested candidates at the approved sites sat through a 5-minute presentation that explained the basic dynamics of the study as expressed best and verbatim through the University of The Cumberlands Participant Recruitment letter. Interested candidates were then given time to make a decision, they could stay and partake in the survey or they could leave.

The interested candidates that stayed completed private anonymous surveys and were given random numbers (1-32) on a small piece of paper, depending on the number of participants in the room. However, the total number of interested candidates among all three sites was 32. The participants were to turn back in the small papers with the numbers on them to the individual conducting the study upon selection. The paper would then be placed into a glass jar for selection. At site one, for example, only 12 candidates showed up, only 11 stayed and 8 were chosen. Numbers 1-12 were given out at this time to candidates. At the second site, 8 interested candidates showed up, 5 stayed and 3 were selected. Only numbers 13 through 21 were given out at the second site. At the third site, 11 interested candidates showed up to the meeting and 9 stayed – only 3 were selected. Numbers 22 through 32 were handed out at the third site. 32 candidates participated in the surveys and out of the 32 candidates, each one had a piece of paper

they could turn into the individual conducting the study. Out of 32 candidates, only 15 participants would be selected, giving each participant an equal chance of being selected for the study. The numbers were randomly added to a digital wheel application called a “picker wheel” (typically used as a strategy in classrooms to balance out engagement in student participation), which allowed the application to randomly select the participants.

The random wheel picker application deletes a number out of the wheel once selected, thus taking out the number from being a probable choice to be selected again. For this study, random sampling was the most appropriate because random sampling allowed for participants to have equal chances of being selected (Brecht, 1983). Based on the parameters of the study, random sampling was also an adequate selection method because the number of candidates nor selected participants was not too large. Moreover, the use of random sampling diminished the level of predictability for participants to know if they would or would not be chosen (Brecht, 1983). Once participants were selected, they were asked to review the informed consent forms provided by The University of The Cumberlands and explained of the coming components of the interview process. Candidates not selected or in agreeance with the informed consent form were excused and dismissed from the survey. There were zero candidates within the group that willingly decided to option out of the study, therefore all dismissed candidates were candidates not selected to participate in the study, or candidates that initially did not choose to say to have a chance at being selected for the study. Participants selected were also explained that they were free to use any expressive language within the answering of the questions and that there would be no re-structuring of their answers.

Once selected, the participants were explained of ethical procedures included in the study as stated verbatim in the guidelines of the informed consent forms provided by The University of

The Cumberlands. Extending from identity anonymity to non-sharing private information, such as the location of labor, age, sex, and race. Since those particular data items were solely able to provide efficacy in the balance of participants chosen, after properly vetted and signed paperwork regarding privacy, information disclosure, and the purpose of research, district leadership was informed of the study and its purpose, and a request for permission was put into place.

After being cleared by the district to compile research during working hours at specific locations with the agreed-upon participants, interviews were scheduled according to availability within eight weeks. At most, two 45-minute interviews were recorded during the eight weeks—one with each of the 15 participants. Fifteen educators served as willing participants, from public schools (ranging from levels of K-12) took part in the exploratory qualitative study. Providing extensive variance in experience from teachers, support staff to current/past administrators.

Trustworthiness

Information consent forms and research procedures/processes were explained to every selected participant in detail. Furthermore, all candidates were informed of research guidelines to be followed by the IRB through a 5-minute short PowerPoint slide show explaining all relative research practices and ethics in detail. Any information gathered from the interviews has only been shared directly with each candidate concerning their answers and with the University of The Cumberlands per IRB reporting guidelines. After selection, each candidate met with the individual conducting the study for 10 minutes to go over research interview parameters, create an interview schedule and cover any questions about security and/or information shared (privacy) concerns.

Credibility

Researcher credibility began with certifications from the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) in Human Subject Research and Social Behavioral Research. Certificates earned have shown that the study had been done through International Research Bureau training. Participants selected were certified educators in Florida and cleared as active in the Department of Education. Participants were also selected from active, state-sanctioned, functioning educational establishments within approved and certified school districts. None of the questions used had been seen by any of the participants before the study sampling interview, and none of the answers were shared afterward with any participant or outside source besides the University of The Cumberlands.

Transferability

The gathered information was directly related to the research questions, topics in question, and the problems being addressed throughout the study. Any information not related to the study and the research questions was dismissed and categorized as not to be used and/or irrelevant to the study. Examples of transferable information included the length of terms in positions, the required number of staff meetings, norms to be followed from one leader to the next, and administrative philosophies experienced. Non-transferable information included violations, write-ups, disciplinary issues, evaluative ratings, and all other personally identifiable information—which was not to be tracked and shared at any time during and after the study ends. The purpose of a frequency quality tracker such as the one used in Table 2, was to maintain alignment in language and show the importance of each word in frequency throughout the qualitative study. The development of frequency quality tracker was developed by the noticeable frequency of commonly used words within participant interview answers. The frequency of the

word and the meaning of the word sharing aligned definitions provide clarity in language shared throughout the study and allowed frequently used words in the report to have weight. Items in an answer, such as specific qualities of leaders, were transferred to a quality tracker table to maintain frequency in the answer of each quality, such as the sample in Table 2. There were no specific programs or software used to disaggregate data within the study, it was all done manually by the individual conducting the study.

Table 2

Frequency Quality Tracker

Participant	EMP	SYM	NUR	CAR	KD	SER	ADP	TRS	LIST	CONS
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14										
15										

Confirmability

Through questioning and interviewing, candidates were asked multiple times if they had any reservations in regards to any of the questions (in specificity with each question) and if they were ok with the recorded answer. To provide optimum confirmability, it was imperative that the participants be able to express themselves honestly, and that the information be transcribed exactly as it was delivered by the participant. Despite being an anonymous interview, research

accuracy in answers and experiences did share commonalities from one participant to another. Participants were also asked multiple times throughout the interviews if they were able to stand firm on their answers or if they needed to amend anything stated throughout the continuation of the study in sampling. Participants were also asked to repeat several answers to document with fidelity, throughout the process. According to participant feedback, each was able to effectively express their answers with the entirety of their thoughts, feelings, and emotions at the moment.

Moreover, confirmability within the exploratory qualitative research was maintained in the transcription of the answers from the interview to the report. None of the words used or examples used within the report were changed, or modified. The purpose of maintaining confirmability within the study was to decrease the level of bias within the study. Thus, rendering the report to only include the true answers of participants within the interview data presented and included in the study report.

Data Analysis

Within the study framework, codes were created and defined below to itemize the category of each response in attachment to specific qualities of humanistic universal existential leaders (HUEL). Definitions for some of the most frequently used words shared by participants were illustrated in Table 3 and coded through abbreviations. At the same time, the thematic analysis recorded the frequency of each code within interviews to properly report the most direly needed qualities to be developed in future leaders. Also, this was done to prevent misrepresentation in the study reporting, where perhaps one single participant expressed a certain quality as needed and necessary. However, most other research data did not share it as a specifically needed quality and behavior. As a qualitative research, the report gave a complete picture of the truth in all participants' messages. While individual answers were not shared, this

study did not have a written portion in the sampling; the frequency of qualities combined with their stories allowed the study and future educators better to understand a combination of components and moving parts.

1. The qualitative data analysis aimed to show commonalities in shared experiences.
2. The qualitative data analysis aimed to show the current issues in education.
3. The qualitative data analysis aimed to show the current wants and needs of educational leaders.
4. The qualitative data analysis aimed at the future foreseen problems from current and past educators within the study.
5. The qualitative data analysis aimed to give insight into what current and future leaders could create as solutions for the current and future problems in education.

Table 3

Definitions and Abbreviations (ABV)

ABV	Definitions
EMP	Empathetic: Words and behaviors associated with empathetic humanity.
SYM	Sympathetic: Words and behaviors associated with sympathetic humanity.
NUR	Nurturing: Words and behaviors associated with nurturing qualities.
CAR	Caring: Words and behaviors associated with caring qualities.
KD	Kind: Words and behaviors associated with kindness.
SER	Servant: Words and behaviors associated with servant leadership.
ADP	Adaptive: Words and behaviors associated with adaptive leadership.
TRS	Transparent: Words and behaviors associated with transparent human communication.
LIST	Listening: Words and behaviors associated with listening qualities.
CONS	Consoling: Words and behaviors associated with consoling qualities.
GEN	Genuine: Words and behaviors associated with genuineness.
REP	Consistent: Words and behaviors associated with consistency and persistence.
AUTH	Authentic: Words and behaviors associated with authentic leadership

ABV	Definitions
ATT	Attentive: Words and behaviors associated with attentive qualities.
HON	Honest: Words and behaviors associated with honesty and truthfulness.
UNW	Unwavering: Words and behaviors associated with bearing qualities.
BRA	Brave: Words and behaviors associated with bravery.
COUR	Courageous: Words and behaviors associated with courage.
PAT	Patient: Words and behaviors associated with patience as a quality.
UND	Understanding: Words and behaviors associated with the ability to understand as a quality.
RES	Respectful: Words and behaviors associated with respectful qualities.
RAT	Rational: Words and behaviors associated with rational qualities.
LOG	Logical: Words and behaviors associated with logical qualities.
PROM	Promoting: Words and behaviors associated with fostering growth and development.
MENT	Mentoring: Words and behaviors associated with mentorship.
POS	Positive: Words and behaviors associated with positive qualities.
WIS	Wise: Words and behaviors associated with wisdom and experience as qualities.
GUID	Guiding: Words and behaviors associated with guidance as a quality.
CLE	Clear: Words and behaviors associated with communication skills as a quality.
SUPP	Supportive: Words and behaviors associated with supportive qualities.
WEL	Welcoming: Words and behaviors associated with welcoming qualities.
MIND	Mindfulness: Words and behaviors associated with mindfulness as a quality.

The definitions in Table 3 were used throughout the study to maintain aligned meaning in language. Language alignment helped maintain truth and accuracy by preparing transcripts and kept vital information from being lost in translation. Using the definitions provided also serves for alignment in language throughout the study report.

Transcripts Preparation

Answers from interviews and shared experiences were turned into summary reports illustrating shared trends, commonalities, and differences. Regarding leaders' specific traits and qualities, answers shared with the most frequency were deemed as the most needed and desired

qualities in Humanistic Universal Existential Leaders. Transcripts did not share any specific identifiable candidate information. Every answer was transcribed in detail, with all ethical bounds maintained, to provide the most natural, truthful, and accurate participant answer. The preparation of transcripts allowed the study to also maintain the methodology of the exploratory qualitative study intact.

Transcription of this report included the transferring of audible, verbalized answers, examples, and definitions stated by participants into a Word document. At first, the interview data would look like notes. Each interview question for each participant was numbered. The time, place, and date of the interview were recorded on the digital Microsoft Word document as well. Each file was saved for example as “participant 1” and so not for each continuing participant. No names were recorded with the transcription of the interview data. Then the interview was analyzed for frequently used words within the bounds of exploratory methodology to see if there were common trends in participant answers. The common trends recorded were also tracked and reported within the study as findings.

Each participant interview then included the interview information as an organized, itemized, numbered, descriptive, and qualitative report. Each participant report also included common trending words tracked. The disaggregation of data was done on a one-by-one participant basis, where none of the data from one participant was mixed with another. The only component that would be tracked for trending commonalities were those of commonly used words and shared definitions. Their stories, examples, and life experiences were maintained intact throughout the reporting of this study.

Summary

Chapter Three showed that the exploratory qualitative research conducted in this study contains words aligned with past and current words/human behaviors associated with leaders. Items addressed in chapter three include Researcher Positionality, trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, ethical considerations, target population, instrument development, field testing, subject recruitment, data collection procedures, data analysis, and transcript preparation explanation. However, the study reports contain new, re-defined, and identified qualities needed in future leaders in further chapters. The study report sought to serve as a starting point for developing future training for humanistic universal existential leaders (HUEL). To meet the demands of the future stakeholder with most humanity, meanwhile also developing each stakeholder as complete sentient humans, ready to problem solve and impact humanity positively on a site-based local, regional, and global sense. The transferability of the answers provided maintains all truthfulness and accurate insight to actual, real candidate answers based on personal and actual real-life experiences within schools.

Moreover, Chapter Three honed in on the importance of language within the report. It was important to maintain language within the report that kept aligned meaning. Using words that may mean something different to one person and another can lead to fallacies in reporting. Thus, the transferring of information throughout the transcribed shared experiences and answers was evaluated and when words were shared with frequency throughout the qualitative study the words were only maintained to provide evidence of alignment in not just perceptive meaning but also altruistic meaning. Maintaining the usage of the word not for the sake of any statistical purpose, but instead to provide confirming validity that the participants were indeed sharing similar and/or different feelings/thoughts. Chapter Three also focused on explaining the process

of research data analysis where the qualitative information presents exploratory descriptions and participant interviews were allowed to be extensive, fluid, and expressive within the allotted interview time. Chapter Three was important to the reporting of the study in order to clearly establish depth to the framework of the research conducted throughout the study.

Moreover, given that the individual conducting the research components of the study was not an expert, it was important to explain the efforts made to create extensive ethical parameters within the developing areas of research. Providing ethics and transparency in order to not only abide by IRB requirements, and also to pay proper respect to the University of The Cumberlands and the participants within the study. The importance of the development of the study was just as important as the findings within the study, which were treated with complete respect to maintaining the stories and answers shared by the participants true.

Chapter Four

Research Findings

Introduction

Participants in this research study unanimously agreed upon some opinions regarding the qualities of leaders. Some agreed-upon qualities were desired, currently seen, and previously seen. Fifteen participants were selected and interviewed within the state of Florida, amounting to over 150 years of experience within the field of education. Of the 15 participants, all were from the public education sector. With the current issues in education amassing to increasing attrition rates and declining proficiency rates, humans live in a world where more and more educators are leaving the industry (at a faster rate) than those entering the industry. More and more districts seem to struggle to find qualified teachers with the passing of each calendar year. The development of principals and assistant principals has also become somewhat of an issue for many districts in the United States due to educators leaving and/or not staying in the profession. Within the foundations of this study, it was imperative to ultimately find insight into what was leading to these changes, with such growing speed and size, and not just nationally within the United States but also globally when it comes to public education. Allowing future educators to understand that they not only have a voice but also allow current and future educational leaders to develop the best solutions for current and future problems.

Attacking a phenomenon as big as the current state of education requires research that called for real-life participants that experienced real-life events to be validated deeper than quantitative values as responses. The focus of this research study was to truly dig into the human roots of the wants and needs of the current and future stakeholders within educational buildings, except for the parent and the students, due to research limitations. However, the study showed

that participants that have dedicated their entire lives to the field of education have not wavered from their mission to serve the public properly, though they have in many ways faced challenges that not only they were unable to meet but their leaders were puzzled at how to meet. Say, for example, the term proficiency within districts, where many report high proficiency levels within subjects such as Algebra I. For instance, a district may say they were 88% proficient in that subject. However, students within the Algebra I subject only need a 22% on their yearly exams to be deemed proficient. Many of the participants in this research mention such standards as too low and troublesome. Creating gaps that may never (in their eyes) be reached or distance gained within numbers throughout a student's educational career in public schooling. Raising red flags for the level of education human gains through public service, which in turn could make an even bigger problem by creating a window of opportunity for others to say that perhaps there was no room for public education anymore and that private education would be the most viable option. A private education that perhaps may not be able to be afforded by the majority of residents within each perspective state (in the example of the United States of America).

Participants and Research Setting

Each interview was conducted in privacy and within the guidelines explained in the initial participant agreement form. Interviews were conducted in person, in secured rooms with no one else. Each interview lasted 30 to 45 minutes, and no participants felt uncomfortable or emotionally triggered by any question. In most cases, the interviews turned into conversations, where participants were glad to be heard and able to express their answers. Participant answers were recorded in writing, and a timer was used in each interview to ensure no interview went over 45 minutes. Participants were labeled from one to 15 based on the order of the interview. It was important to note that common themes emerged among participants, which indicated that

data saturation had been reached within the sampling population. Table 4 included demographic information for all of the study participants.

Table 4

Demographic Information for Research Participants

Participant	Years Experience	Position	Number of Principals Worked For	Likely to Leave Education	Likely to Retire from Education
1	32	Dean	26		X
2	12	Media Specialist	8	X	
3	8	Program Assistant	10	X	
4	2	Teacher	1		X
5	16	Teacher	6	X	
6	21	Teacher	12	X	
7	8	Assistant Principal	5		X
8	18	Principal	7		X
9	10	Custodian	11	X	
10	4	Teacher	2		X
11	30	Teacher	24		X
12	1	Teacher	1	X	
13	15	Counselor	8	X	
14	24	Secretary	18		X
15	3	Teacher	2	X	

Questions were read one at a time from a computer screen; participants could speak freely on their answers or be as direct as they wanted. There was no expectation set as to any framework of answers needed or desired, only whatever truth participants chose to share out. There two main research questions of focus in this study were:

1. According to education practitioners, what specific human qualities are likely to exist among future existential educational leaders?
2. Can educators develop better (future) existential leaders by specifically identifying the current human and universal needs in education?

The research questions showed the big picture of what the interview questions focused on. The first question was composed of answers derived from questions one through five but also included question 10 within its answer. The reality was that teachers wanted to see leaders that were empathetic, courageous, sympathetic, and able to solve real-world problems. The second research question was composed of interview answers from questions six through ten. The second research question posed more of a moral and permanent task on the educator, asking current and future educators to build schools that essentially focus on building well-rounded, complete humans. This line of questioning pertained to exceptional test-takers and individuals capable of solving real-world problems, thereby potentially contributing to the universal continuity of the human race.

Study Analysis

The study focused on finding the desired and wished qualities of educational leaders. Participants could base their answers on the current and future needs of education. The Study hopes to identify the qualities of leaders needed to develop better educational leaders in the future. After analysis of the study results, the study's impact certainly shared ways educators may be able to change the curve on teacher attrition rates in hopes of decreasing the number of teachers and educators leaving the field of education in the future and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of educational leaders within districts (in all capacities). The process of data gathering (once IRB approval was gained) from beginning to end was best described as follows:

1. Participants were recruited anonymously within different approved districts using the recruiting letter approved by the University of The Cumberlands.

2. Interested participants willingly took part in anonymous approved participant surveys to maintain anonymity in participant selection and allow only qualified participants to partake in the sampling.
3. Participants were selected randomly from a number generator.
4. Selected participants could then see the approved informed consent letter from the University of The Cumberlands regarding this study.
5. Selected participants who signed the informed consent form were contacted for in-person and/or non-recorded video Zoom interviews.
6. Selected participants were asked multiple times throughout the study if they were comfortable with the questions and/or their feelings through their answering.
7. During the interviews, the frequency of stated quality was charted through the quality tracker and properly matched with the definitions and abbreviation table. Information gathered through interviews was then analyzed and turned into a full report.

Focusing on the randomization of participant selection meanwhile maintaining their anonymity was the main goal in the preparation of the study sampling. Maintaining privacy and ethical procedures was the main focus before the sampling. Transcribing with accuracy and truth was the main focus after data collection, as well as maintaining anonymity, privacy, and all IRB-mandated ethics in place. Taking a look at the analysis of each question was also a focus point that provided support to the two main research questions.

Analysis of Research Questions

The exploratory qualitative study included supporting interview questions that provided depth, and real-life experiences with components that specifically support the two main research questions of the study. The experiences shared by the participants were transcribed with accuracy

and truthfulness. Efforts to preserve the raw honesty of participants throughout the report include the alignment and addition of clearly defined terms that allow for clarity and uniformity in the meaning of words used by participants throughout their interview answers. The verbiage in each question was purposefully selected to maintain alignment in language to definitions of key terms and words used throughout the study, directly about research questions, interview questions, and participant answers.

Research Question One

Research question one asked teachers/staff and stakeholders, according to education practitioners, what specific human qualities are likely to exist among future existential educational leaders? This study explored the specific human qualities that building teachers/stakeholders expect to observe in prospective existential leaders. Research question one aimed to address this inquiry. Five theme findings emerged to address research question one (see Table 5).

Table 5

Research Question One: Major Themes

Theme	Frequency	%
1. Empathy	13/15	87
2. Humanity & Community	8/15	53
3. Sentient Existence	9/15	60
4. Actions	15/15	100
5. Worthless	8/15	53

To obtain the necessary insights, a set of five interview questions, as presented in Table 1 in Chapter Three, were utilized sequentially. These questions delved into various aspects, such as

desired qualities in educational leaders, perceptions of humanism and existentialism, strategies for creating impactful leadership in education, and factors contributing to teacher attrition.

Interview Question One. The first question asked participants to give examples of qualities they wish to see in educational leaders. The first interview question ultimately sought to determine what current educators feel, think, and need concerning their leaders and their qualities. Tasking the participants to give exact examples of life experiences where they saw such qualities exemplified. The exploratory methods of the study tapped into what educators think by giving them a space to tell their stories and anonymously use their voices. One of the most significant factors that came up in recruitment was anonymity. Most candidates asked, “Will my boss find out about this?” In the world of education, that question was a lot different than when asked in the corporate world.

For instance, in the corporate world, people would most likely be immediately fired if they said something bad about the company boss. In education, due to teacher shortages, a teacher seldom gets fired just for saying a negative comment about the principal (for example). However, the repercussions and retaliation (though this was often frowned upon) can be far worse than firing a teacher. Once the anonymity in the study process of this study was mentioned, candidates were eager to participate. Thus the first question posed not only led to incredible answers, with similar traits in frequency, but the hearts of the educators being interviewed began to pour out, different souls stating similar pains and similar needs/wants as traits in educational leaders. The development of the first interview question set its roots in providing the participant with an opportunity to voice out their wants and needs. Relating them to experiences would also deliver a sense of empathy and humanity to the educational leaders at their building level.

Theme One: Empathy. Research methods tap into the psyche of the educator, emotions, and soul by asking a simple question, hoping to curve the attrition rates currently seen in education. For instance, the first research question regarding the wished traits in a leader was an open-ended question allowing people to speak with freedom yet attaching to direct and specific terms: Empathetic (EMP), confident (CON), humble (HUM), resilient (RES), accountable (ACC), consistent (CONS), flexible (FLX), relatable (RELT), fair (FAI), honest (HON), inspiring (INS), motivational (MOT), problem-solving (PS), and after all brave (BRA). Empathy was the one word that each participant (13/15) mentioned and described as most relative to humans and their natural humanity. Educational Leaders (all leaders, for that matter) should be able to relate to those they lead (Zhao, 2015). According to the participants in this study, one of the most lacking qualities shared by educational leaders was empathy. For example, most of the time, teachers and students do not feel that the educational leaders within and outside their buildings can relate to them appropriately. One specific participant gave an example of when one of their supervising educational leaders pulled them aside to ask them about their recent family death. The participant expressed that she had not been able to effectively complete her evaluations during observations and this concerned the evaluator. So the administrator instead of giving her bad ratings, pulled her in for a meeting and asked her “are you ok?” Something as simple as showing care, instead of dropping a negative evaluation and/or feedback in an observation showed the teacher that the administrator had empathy (Aloni, 1997). The participant stated that she had been through six different principals and “it had taken a huge mental health toll, just the change from one principal to the other and it had only been like, what, six years?”

Through the eyes of each participant, the yearning for a spark of hope could be seen. Perhaps, they would find such a leader in the future, someone that could keep their spark and fire alive. The magnitude of her statements and others like it could fill endless spaces throughout the universe with sadness. To build a leader of the future that could may-be ready for the needs of the future would mean to have a leader able to get them through today (Sparks, 2023). The most shared examples regarding the qualities of leaders exemplified the following qualities: Empathetic, humble, honest, brave, fair, and problem-solving. However, one of the most powerful answers came with the use of the word exemplary. One participant described exemplary leadership as someone willing to serve when others would not, being an example of what should be done, and embodying expectations in action. Giving an example of a principal that would pick up trash during lunch duties. The participant mentioned that the principal would dress professionally every single day, typically in a three-piece suit, but work relentlessly through lunch duties by picking up trash with the custodians. The participant was talking about their principal at a high school with over three thousand students. Such an example, solidified in the eyes of the participant that this was an exemplary leader.

Interview Question Two. The second interview question was, give examples of what humanism means to you. The second interview question was meant to define what traits of their humanity educational leaders need to maintain protected; what do they think was most important as a human? In doing so, the aim was to investigate the present state of morale among human educators thoroughly. Some participants mentioned philosophers such as Plato, mentioning that humanism was the idea that humanity was special, a true miracle. Some others mentioned humanism as us being one of the only creatures to have shared a sense of community. In comparison, others mentioned ethics and the importance of maintaining and placing ethics within

organizations since many people share similar and different experiences. One participant gave an example of when one of her supervisors (an assistant principal) helped her carry items from her car into the school during the first few days of school. The teacher was arriving late to the first day of school because she could hardly load some school supplies she was bringing in for the kids, working at a title one school, she wanted to make sure her kids had bookbags and other supplies. The administrator had texted her to see if she was ok since she had not shown up to duty. Worried that she would be written up for being tardy the first day, the assistant principal instead walked outside, greeted her in the parking lot, and helped her carry the items inside. Then, the administrator sent out an email to the staff, letting other teachers know that she had some supplies for kids just in case they needed her. Consequentially, other teachers then began to do the same and brought supplies on their own for the kids (though not arriving late). After the teachers did this for one year, the administrator opened up a supply closet that was fed by the school budget and donor budget, a teacher budget that offered students supplies on site. It became a yearly tradition. The humanity of one assistant principal coming out to give the teacher help, then shouting her out, started a cultural shift for the positive. Where it could have turned negative and perhaps never allowed the tradition of the supply closet to begin. The second interview question was developed with the purpose of awakening the participant, to understand that they themselves are still considered human beings, even within the confines of their workplace. The question would also serve as a reminder to educational leaders that they themselves and their staff members share altruistic humanity within the building, even during work hours.

Theme Two: Humanity & Community. Though probing deeper than the answers given was not something completely desired, participant elaboration was not stopped. Many candidates

sharing the idea of ethics within the workplace mentioned that humanism in a leader is measured by their ability to impact anything outside themselves (Osborne, 2011). Likewise, as one candidate would describe, humanism was also about seeing the best parts of yourself in others. She stated, “one time I mentored a brand new teacher, she had no clue man, no clue, but neither did I when I first got into this. A lot of this job is just hanging on together” While many of the other candidates had never heard the word *humanism* and could not define it, but also guessed that perhaps it had to do with anything related to humanity and community. As stated in Table 5, eight out of 15 participants mentioned humanity and community in their answers as important themes.

The study showed that participants yearned for a sense of humanity and community within their schools. Theme two served directly as a guiding point towards building the blueprint of creating an environment within workspaces that harbored community and humanity (Roberts, 2000). According to participants (by majority) suggested what studies have pointed to in the past, a need for living, human qualities to be on display at work. A sense of humanity and community allowed the participants and leaders to relate on a deeper level than the common goal to be attained within the organization (Schneider & Shabahangi, 1998).

Interview Question Three. Interview question three asked, give examples of what existentialism means to you. Tasking participants to dig deep into their awareness. A question was also posed to spark the thought that their existence still and always matters. Some of the shared answers received for this question stated (in essence) that existentialism was directly related to purpose. Translation, “what do you think humans are here for?” This endeavor seeks to establish a coherent connection between their sense of purpose and a comprehensive definition of existence to provide a more profound insight into educators' perspectives. One candidate

mentioned existentialism was the understanding that though there may be multiple perceptions of one incident, there can only be one truth.

The development of the third interview questions included the purpose of developing a sense of value and awareness in existence within the participant. Allowing the participant to understand that what they do matters and that they are existential beings within the confines of their work spaces, be it the classroom or the school hallways. Moreover, awakening the same concept within their educational leaders, creating a sense that hope and motivation could be shared as existential beings working towards a common, existential goal. Giving higher meaning to the presence of the educator within the building, by giving the participant a space to share the impactful magnitude of their works in the lives of others through examples and experiences shared.

Theme Three: Sentient Existence. The study finds that most participants (9/15) see existentialism as part of humanity in all life forms. Likewise, existentialism is the individual's ability to step outside of the self and see how educators impact the world instead of how the world impacts educators (Morse, 1992). Others defined existentialism as something that can relate humans to the supernatural, perhaps something that bonds both the spirit and the body, describing existence as humans being full sentient beings. In each case, it was evident that existentialism is something that humans relate to positively and allows them to connect their application of efforts in labor (in conjunction with time) with a passion and calling into service even (Lawler, 2005). For educators, particularly in this study, it was evident that there was a strong correlation within described experience between servitude and meaning. Most of the participants interviewed in this study continued to connect servitude to existentialism, directly linking their years of service and their purpose as living humans. However, many participants did

not know what the term meant and could not correctly define it either, some mentioning that perhaps it was about something existing and others mentioning that it could be some higher thinking, but they were unsure what. The open-ended freedom in the question allowed the participants to dig deep and think without fear of being right or wrong. One participant gave an example of a flower, comparing humanism and existentialism to the development of a flower. The participant went on to elaborate “people are like flowers, good soil, bad soil, water, and the right voice can help them grow” Humans need to constantly be “watered” to exist and grow. Universally speaking, the participant honed in on the importance of the quality of the water and also, relating negative and positive comments to harmful and healthy comments. The participant pressed, that if someone were to blow a candle they could put out a fire, “you know not all fires start big, but a small fire is one nonetheless, if you tell a small child they will never become anything, they might believe it” The participant continued to explain that the same thing can happen to the spirit of a human in many ways of existential morality even. If someone says negative things to a person, over and over, they would most likely not grow to be very healthy. Similarly, if leaders place people in negative environments, with negative people and surroundings their existence may be prevalent but not necessarily healthy or fruitful to the existence of good works (Haidt, 2008).

Interview Question Four. Interview question number four was: How can leaders create a high level of impact? Again, participants led the answers with words like community and climate. Some participants explained that leaders wanting to develop a high level of impact should focus on the climate they were creating and the type of community they were building more than production and success. Other participants tasked leaders to focus on consistently getting involved and that they should look at students as completely functioning humans, not just

performance bands and numbers. The fourth interview question was developed with the purpose of longevity. Providing the participant with an opportunity to share information, moments, experiences, words, and illustrations of impactful moments throughout their careers. Similarly awakening the sense of the educational leader, providing all stakeholders with a sense of power in action.

Theme Four: Actions. Surprisingly, none of the educators interviewed in the study mentioned any correlation to actions needed toward staff members; they all spoke about actions needed to impact students. The unanimous agreement on the importance of actions was eye-opening on many levels because it showed that most educators were constantly focused on the well-being of students and perhaps were not likely to connect impact to their actions (Downey et al., 2014). One participant excerpt described an example of impact through actions as leaders must understand staff and students beyond the data, decisions that were made outside of the classroom impact the results within the classroom, the ability to actively build culture starts with saying hi and bye, more than it does by releasing teaching strategies for the instructional staff to use (Benevene et al., 2019). Another participant gave an example of negative impact, sharing the story of one of their previous principals who used the word love all of the time, “love your students” The participant went on to ask out loud “what does that even mean, the word love is so strong and different to everyone” she also, then explained that, then after two years into his principal-ship an investigation was opened due to allegations of child abuse within the building. The principal ended up not only losing their teaching license but also their job. Why? Because staff members within his faculty were inappropriately touching students and even taking kids home. The participant went on to explain that a word such as love has so many different meanings to people. The participant wished that the principal had defined the meaning of the

sentence “love your students” and as wild as it may sound, specified the limitations of relationships, and exemplified the appropriate ethical bounds on what he meant the word to mean in its entirety as related to education in any way. Something as small as the use of a word can lead to a giant, permanent impact not only on the culture of a school but in the lives of the students and teachers within it (Breyer, 2014).

Interview Question Five. What has led to teacher attrition? In this question, the focus was to ultimately find out what has recently and or historically made educators leave the field of education. Participant answers ranged in variety within their examples, starting with misunderstanding, pressing within their answers that teachers often were not explained this adequately, and there was often a disconnect between purpose, mission, and actions. Such disconnect causes morale to decrease because teachers find little humanity in their profession and meaning in their existence when there was no purpose to their actions, importance in opinions, thoughts, feelings, and/or presence. According to several participants, teachers leave the profession ultimately because they do not feel respected, supported, and needed. An example given by one of the participants was of a teacher that sent a student to the discipline office at their school for consequences, but instead, the student was rewarded with “chill time” and even food at times, undermining the existence and humanity of the disciplining teacher. Leading to no change in the behavior of the student. Since the dean did this with multiple students, the non-academic behaviors began to rise within the school. More and more teachers became disgruntled with the administrative staff, surveys showed data from teacher responses that included their displeasure with their administrative support. Thus, the doors to the school began to revolve, with one teacher leaving, to what the participant reports, turned into 18 teachers leaving the

school that summer, all claiming that it was because of the lacking support in classroom management from the administrative staff.

Another factor expressed by participants regarding this question was that teachers yearn to be led. Bottom line, the study showed that if teachers were not led, it caused a sense of fear where there was no vision or direction. Likewise, some participants mentioned that if expectations did not match support, there was no truth, and if teachers did not see the truth in their daily work, they were less likely to stay in the “good fight” of education. Moreover, items within the classroom also play a role, such as supplies, resources, and support from the administration regarding discipline and behaviors.

If teachers were not supported in their growth and development, odds were they have not been happy with their leaders. If staff members felt as if they were only supervised odds were they have also felt unhappy in their job and this too has led to attrition, such theory can be further supported by Herzberg, where he mentioned the wants and needs of teachers to be those closely attached to self-affirmation and a sense of achievement. Meanwhile deterring factors to the morality of a teacher often included the implementation of strict discipline policies and punishments.

The creation of the fifth interview question was to directly get to the root of one of the biggest problems faced in the world of education. Allowing participants to address the mindset of the instructional employee, express pressures, and give insight into components that have attributed to the rising numbers in the shortage of teachers. Of course, in hopes of informing the educational leaders of the pressing variables that often lead to instructional attrition.

Theme Five: Worthless. However, according to (8/15) participants, one of the most contributing factors to teacher attrition was the lack of importance placed on the educators' jobs

by politicians. Making instructors and staff members feel worthless, which has been something identified as a negative integer attached to rising attrition rates (Hunter & Laigon, 2013).

Participants mentioned that state rules and laws, along with federal laws, constantly find themselves inconsistently aligned with the current and future needs of educators. Moreover, there was very little done to protect educators and develop educators. From compensation to rights, participants mentioned a lackluster effort in support exemplified by governmental branches. Which, in turn, makes educators want to leave the profession altogether.

Moreover, participants mentioned that pay was another factor that becomes extremely important when a teacher serves in education. Some participants stated that if teachers got paid more, perhaps it would place more of an importance tag and worth on the job, making people respect the role more extrinsically. Others said that lacking pay only mirrors what districts and governments exemplify as a teacher's worth. The shared sentiment and concern for the feeling of lacking professional worth among educators was alarming, considering the current shortage of teachers worldwide, not just in the United States of America. One example shared by participants specifically stated what seemed to be a common thought shared by many of the participants, "if I got paid more, perhaps the kids would respect what I do more"

Research Question Two

Research question two asked, how can educators develop better (future) existential leaders? by specifically exemplifying and identifying the current human and universal needs in education. In this study, research question two sought to examine whether educators can enhance the development of future existential leaders by explicitly identifying the prevailing human and universal needs within the realm of education. Five theme findings emerged to address research question two (see Table 6).

Table 6*Research Question Two: Major Themes*

Theme	Frequency	%
1. Change	14/15	93
2. Hope	15/15	100
3. Performance	10/15	66
4. Technology	9/15	60
5. Togetherness	13/15	87

A series of interview questions numbered six through ten, as displayed in Table 1 in Chapter Three, were employed to address research question two. These interview questions aimed to uncover crucial insights by exploring factors such as the motivations for remaining in the field of education, the existing qualities observed in educational leaders, current challenges in education, anticipated future problems, and strategies for educational leaders to tackle both present and future issues in the field.

Interview Question Six. What keeps you in education? The answers to this question were outstanding; most participants did not know how to answer this at first, as if surprised that anyone would be asking such a question. Referring again to their purpose in existence, their need to serve others, which is something that has been defined as one of the qualities that motivated teachers to stay in education (Massey, 2010). Recanting stories of their career, small ones that may seem meaningless, where they once had to search a trashcan for a tooth, to giant stories where they had to help families re-unify after a major school threat or incident.

The purpose of the sixth interview question was to provide the educational leader with hope, something that has been linked to high teacher retention when cultivated within the culture of educational buildings. Meanwhile igniting purpose and motivating the participant and

allowing them to work through changes. In some moments, this was seen during the interview process of the study, in other moments, only the jaded expression of a burned-out educator was seen during the answering of this question. The burned-out educator has been one of the most frequent educators to leave education.

Theme Six: Change. By the majority, however, there was one single unifying factor that each participant shared, the constant drive to change lives (Querolo et al., 2022). There was little to nothing else in life that seems to spark up the hearts of educators (at least during this study); participants were extremely vested in the relationships they have built and created, not just with other educators but with families and students (Schwartz, 2022). One participant told a story about one of their students who went on to become one of their mentored teachers. The instructor had the student as a member of his Physics class during his Senior year of high school in 2012. Then years later in 2021, the student became a teacher in the science department at the same school. Ironically, the participant became the teacher mentor for the former student. Another participant gave an example of a student who remembered them since age 11 as an elementary student. The participant was invited to the student's wedding, though their former student was no longer 11, she was now 32 years old and still remembered her as an impactful person in her life. Impactful enough to invite her to their wedding. The participant cried during this portion of the interview, stating “it's crazy because those are the moments that keep me in education” Pressing that the job was more than just teaching to the test. The teacher lives alone now, her biological kids have kids that were older than 11, but this was one of her favorite parts and stories of her career as an educator. Theme six pointed at the enduring flexibility educators exemplified through their careers, their ability to endure principal changes, district mandates, and the change in students from year to year (Walker, 2022).

Interview Question Seven. What qualities do you currently see in educational leaders?

Some of the answers to this question range from positive to negative connotations. The exploratory methods included in the sub-questions, such as tasking a participant to give insight on qualities that they currently see in educational leaders – with altruistic truth. Some participants mentioned that some of the qualities they see in current leaders were exemplified as resilience, or lacking accountability, lackluster motivation, jadedness, disconnectedness, drive, pretentiousness, boldness, low standards, lacking communication, negative, self-centeredness, title/power-seeking. The participants gave examples of how some of their educational leaders were more interested in their title and how they can get to the next title than actually educating kids or growing teachers. These were all eye-opening statements as well when it comes to the current state of leadership. However, one of the most alarming examples came from a participant that had been in education for over 30 years, the participant mentioned he had seen a change in the quality of leadership. A decline, in the 1980s, the participant mentioned that leaders were very much so performance-oriented and left little room for the human development of the teacher. Then during the 90s, the participant mentioned that educational leaders began to focus on the disciplinary measures within the school buildings, focusing more on systems in place and the prevention of violence. Then during the two-thousands, the participant reports that he noticed a change in the focus of leadership to conversations regarding data, and conversations regarding school safety. In all different eras of education experienced by the participant, he mentions that the level of disconnect between administrator and teacher has only grown in size, partially according to the participant, due to the increasing changes in ethics and policies that constantly separate administrative staff from instructional staff.

Probably and arguably one of the most important interview questions, the development of the seventh question was to provide districts with qualities that could be embedded and taught to future educational leaders. Allowing participants to completely give their perceptions and understandings of what made leaders good in their opinion.

Theme Seven: Hope. All participants gave examples of hope as one of the things they see in current leaders though, be it hope that they would get to a better place or that things could somehow change. A few participants once again also mentioned that empathy was one of the most essential attributes of leadership, though they do not see this often. Participants also mentioned that with hope comes growth and that staff members, just like students, like to see hope in their future as a motivator for their own career development and growth (Massey, 2010). One participant specifically mentioned the importance placed by educational leaders on mental health issues. The participant mentions that the recent changes in education shedding light on mental health issues have helped both students and teachers. Pointing at recent school shootings and acts of violence within schools, the participant became visibly emotional about the hopes that perhaps educators can create systems in place that protect staff members and teachers (Vandekerckhove, 2020). The participant mentioned that “schools should worry less about government policies and more about what actual in-school leaders were doing to protect their front offices” Then, the participant gave positive remarks about his current principal, stating that the principal gave him hope that with proper communication and culturally embedded safety training school can properly protect their students and staff members. Theme seven provided educators the ability to express the psychological significance and impact of having hope in order to adjust to the challenges within education (Schwartz, 2022).

Interview Question Eight. The following question was: What are the current problems you see in education? The purpose of this question was to define problems faced by educators daily. The exploratory measures within this question open the floor for participants to share their deep thoughts and opinions regarding what they perceive as problems and issues within the school system. Since some of the problems come from various sources, it was ideal to identify the current problems with specificity and the root of the problems. For the sake of research, providing altruistic accuracy in what participants deem—a problem. Purposefully, allowing the study to illustrate the clearest picture available regarding answers to this question based on real-life share experiences.

The purpose of the eight interview questions and their formulation also focused on providing answers not only to districts and educators but to further implications of this study. With the answers being related to future problems of education, the question opened the floor up to not only perception or prediction but also to the development of solutions in real-time.

Lacking specialization seems to be one of the most shared and alarming issues expressed by participants regarding this question. Participants share a current and sizeable issue that districts, states, and municipalities have resorted to tragically accepting anyone with any background—due to shortage. Doing so (accepting anyone) has decreased performance standards in the teacher's career. Thus bringing down the level of reverence for the job and profession. Making it almost ok for anyone of any walk of life or background to become a teacher. One participant used the example of a broken stick. The participant, an avid gardener, used the example of a planted tree that was not growing straight. Explaining that she used some ropes and strings to tie the tree down to the ground to place pressure against the side it was leaning towards (the side that looked like could break and bend as it grew). Since the ropes and strings did not

work, the participant then had to use another wooden log, much stronger and healthier in growth that had been cut exactly to the needed size and measurement fit enough to help the other tree grow straight if tied to it. The participant explained that similarly to teaching, we need whole, strong, and able adults to join the profession, much like the analogy of the growing tree tied to the strong wooden log that was used as growth support.

Theme Eight: Performance. Another issue expressed by participants was the extreme focus on testing and performance. A stressor that has indeed skewed education and the perception of success in education has been ultimately tied to the scores of students and teachers (Behling & Tobin, 2018). Participants stress that there was a decrease in the level of art in education, where science has replaced all parts of humanity and aligned numbers to value each stakeholder.

Some of the other issues brought up by participants point to fiscal budgets, the lacking funds in schools, and the misdistribution of funding in school districts, which each has contributed to the rising attrition rates in education (Loweus, 2021). However, none reported such incidents within their current working districts, let alone in other districts where their children may attend or where they have previously been employed. Followed by the amount of technology influencing the classroom and the decreased level of human interaction in classrooms since the implementation of new technologies has been introduced into education. The ability in the performance of all stakeholders was said to be constantly measured by administrators and school districts, but they stress that placing too much importance on such components can lead to severe problems. An example used related to this theme was by one participant who told a story about end-of-year data talks. The teacher was in their ninth year of teaching and she was cut from her job. The principal told her that it was due to her lacking performance. Thought the

teacher had only received two out of five evaluations with a low score. The teacher was cut from the position and then hired at another school, where she was then cut again due to what that principal described as budget cuts. The teacher then left teaching for a corporate job but missed teaching. So, during one of the open summers, she went to a job fair, where she got a teaching job, under the conditions that she needed (as she stated) “to show growth in student performance for the first three years or else” The teacher reports that she had no health issues, no mental health problems, and that the limitations of her performance were already determined by the curriculum, pace, and student placement within her classes in terms of academic performance levels. Meaning, she was teaching in classes with a high number of students, all with various academic needs, special needs, and low test scores, most of who were often years below grade level in reading. The teacher brought this to light during the interview because she wished someone had provided her with more guidance towards improvement, training, and development, than just telling her “you need to do better” Performance was one of the most important factors in any position, but one thing should be held as a certainty. If educational leaders do not develop their teachers, then who could? Development does not just happen with feedback, it happens with resources, courses, conversations, insight, lesson studies, and support (Trow & Burrage, 2010).

Interview Question Nine. What problems do you foresee in the future of education? Which shared similar answers to the previous question; participants shared that they were concerned with the overuse and misuse of technology and being overpowered by parents and external stakeholders such as politicians and taking autonomy away from the educator, and placing the power in the hands of external, detached members of society that can still make and change laws that directly impact schools. The exploratory qualitative information provided by

participants for this particular answer was astonishing. Simply because the question left the opportunity to answer openly, not just to perception but also to unlimited thoughts in possibilities.

The purpose of the development of the ninth interview question was to provide educators with insight that could help them develop proactive measures. Perhaps, even at times preventative measures. The possibility that any of the predicted problems would become true would only provide depth to the ability of problem-solving for educational leaders.

Theme Nine: Technology. Most participants worry that the future of education does not include human instructors. In some shape or another, most participants continued to refer to the use of technologies as a lingering problem that takes away the value of the human. Such overuse of technology often replaces different successful strategies they used and used in the past (Messinger-William & Marino, 2010). Other participants see favor in the use of technology, hoping to make more significant strides in how schools reach different learners of different capacities through different modalities of technology. While a few participants mentioned the importance of balance in power. Expressing their worry specifically, that “politicians give too much power to parents” and stakeholders outside the school system. Which, in turn, takes power away from the teacher and the ability of teachers to influence their educational classroom environments. Ironically, many of the participants shared a deep concern for the impact of artificial intelligence in the classroom. Using examples of applications and programs currently used as “strategies”, typically mandated by districts to be embedded in their curriculum as – dangerous. One participant mentioned that the use of such applications was diminishing the art of teaching in its human form. Taking away the human component in the transferring of information and replacing it with sterile, static, flat-line streamed information from a stationary

artificial component to the human (Wallace et al., 2015). When once the transferring of information was typically all done between humans and human(s) now, there was a middle-man, so to speak.

Yet some participants did credit the use of technology, as advantageous for statistical purposes of data disaggregation and maintenance. However, the same participants also shared a concern for replacement. Pressing that they (participants) “do see a future where artificial intelligence could potentially replace the common teacher” Specifically, since artificial intelligence would not worry about evaluations, conditions of labor, and/or time off or pay. Bringing light through its exploratory qualitative description of a problem that could perhaps be plausible and foreseen. This was not so much a future problem as it was already a rising phenomenon, where humanism and humanity in education have been replaced by artificial intelligence in many aspects with the introduction of applications and to increase monitoring and engagement in the classroom (Messinger-William & Marino, 2010).

Interview Question Ten. How can educational leaders solve the current and future problems in education? The question was aimed to tap into how educators hope leaders have solved the current problems and those that may come to reality. Taking the pulse of this thinking was ideal when developing leaders because one can truly see into the heart and minds of educators how the problems were influencing them now and how they feel problems may impact them later. Once again maintaining the exploratory methodology through the study by allowing the participant to answer openly with free thought, expression, and feeling and no limitation in the examples to be used. Question ten was developed with the purpose of developing a sense of proactivity within educational leaders. Though aimed at the participant, the tenth interview question is directed in answer, completely to all educational leaders at all levels.

Theme Ten: Togetherness. Participants urge that coming together was the first action to take when tackling problems of today and tomorrow. Expressing that stakeholders share the exact wants and needs, some of the answers to some problems cannot be too far beyond the school building. Having uncomfortable conversations was also one of the main actions when developing answers (Waterman, 2013). Participants stress the importance of having deep conversations, beyond levels of performance, beyond the ethics of buildings and placing importance on getting to know one another within the building as fully functioning human beings. Serving as a pillar within communities means nothing if the community does not see the truth in leadership if they do not see a commonality in leadership (Rae, 2010).

Busy leaders that focus on the wrong things within education multiply other leaders from their establishments that focus on the same things and perhaps not on the essential things like student learning. All participants shared a concern about time, explaining that leaders now were not truly available, seen, or heard and perhaps lack autonomy within their schools. The thoughts explained were that most teachers did not feel they have any say-so, and they also feel that their leaders do not have much of a say-so. Districts have to and should (by majority consensus) give autonomy to school leaders to use different strategies and methods to run their perspective buildings. According to one participant, the idea was that the leaders of today were “more worried about advancing and climbing within ranks than and not worried so much about future problems” Expanding on their example, the participant took off his glasses and grabbed the ridges between his nose and eyes with the index finger and thumb of his right hand. Excusing himself for a second. The participant was asked if he was ok. After replying that he was, he held back some tears and stated that he wished he could be more to education. Leaning forward on his chair, the participant then almost as if fueled by the motivation to tell his story, gasped for new

air and continued. Once during the middle of his 24-year career, the participant experienced a new administration transition. Typically these were normal in education, they also occur in high frequency, usually every three to four years. During a meeting with one of his new administrative members, the participant overheard a phone conversation that the principal was having with the administrator (now his supervising assistant principal). Allegedly, the participant claimed that the overheard conversation sounded like this “we just gotta out live em’ here, either we will be gone or they will be gone in a year, we just gotta survive this bud until the next job” The participant continued with his story, explaining that the comment made him realize right then and there that he was only as valuable as any other resource in the building, a replaceable application, a replaceable book, marker, notebook, folder, staple, chair, and furniture. Moreover, the realization became fear, that the administrative staff had not only come to clean the house but also that they did not care for whoever was there. When asked why this was such a big issue, the participant then stated that the school had been *his* school and the school for many other loyal teachers for 12 years up to that point. He had known nothing else and feared for the future.

The story brought about something quite alarming, educational leaders must and should understand that people should not be treated as replaceable resources. Perhaps, this is one other aspect of lost humanity within education. Where staff members and allocations were tied more to budget than they were to value, but not matched in the budget to their altruistic value, or even maximized potential in value. Essentially, the humanity of a teacher should be valued more, and in turn, so should the life of students. Leaders of the future should strive for ways that express and exemplify the value in teachers and students, far beyond budgetary measures, beginning with acts of simple humanity (Rae, 2010).

Supplementary Findings

Participants stressed the importance of the self. Leaders and stakeholders need to feel validated within and outside the building. Contributing factors to each classroom cannot come from influencing doorframes that were in no way attached to the actual classroom. Though funding was essential, for instance, there should not be a limitation in resources where there was a stated goal of improvement in the lives of human people. There must be a balance between what was being expected and what was being provided to meet such expectations.

One particular participant explained in their own words, that they identify with “servant leadership” and the participant explained their need to “develop others” as much as themselves. The constant need to grow and push themselves forward, not into the next title, but instead into the next progressive step in development. The same participant that shared such insight, has thirty-two years in education and continues to find ways of developing others. The idea that people may never want to stop developing other people and not just themselves was quite the jovial and refreshing idea, which perhaps places a seed of hope in educational leaders of the future.

Another participant explained the importance of the development of self-purpose. Stating that a person in education would not last if the person does not dedicate their time to more than just working and/or doing good works. The idea suggested and posed was that educators should continue to find ways of developing their reason for being in education, perhaps to something that extends beyond the walls of the classroom and into the walls of their own lives. In other words, suggesting the idea that education and the life of an educator must be lived fully blended, as learning takes part in all aspects of life.

One other participant pressed and focused on developing others in a way that helps them develop further than they may be aiming for. Introducing the idea that those in education should strive to hold positions that allow for influence. In doing so (gaining positions of influence) the educator may have a larger platform of influence, but also a larger platform for development and growth.

A couple of other candidates harped on the importance of developing and impacting the spirit of the educator. Mentioning that public service included the betterment of the self to promote the betterment of others. The connection to the human spirit and its complete impact in all aspects of life, not just education – yet in this example, education. Impacting the soul and heart of the educator and stakeholders within a school or educational establishment.

A few other participants made a connection with self-development and purpose being aligned with the perception of fitting in and belonging. Explaining that when teachers do not feel as if they belong, teachers have to take action and leave. Currently, the state of education cannot afford more people leaving the field, therefore leaders should strive to develop strategies that allow humans to build that sense of belonging and culture, starting with something that also affirms the self. Another participant unknowingly would add depth to the idea of developing the self, by explaining that contributing to the wellbeing of others and the progression of the school was just as important of a part in self-development as training and promotions. Giving insight into the idea that there was little to any promotion within the world of education, let alone a teacher. For instance, if a teacher does well, the teacher may now get the students that were striving in larger gaps and need of growth. If a principal turns a school around, the principal may be moved to a more challenging school. Yet, amid all things and changes, there would hardly be any room for the development of the self, let alone for developing others.

Summary

The fourth chapter of this research outlines the expressed thoughts, feelings, ideas, and perceptions of educators. Where leadership and humanity meet among shared wants and needs. Participants stressed the need for empathy within education and the want for leaders who can solve problems today and tomorrow. Meanwhile, building communities and climates in a culture that harbor the development of teachers and students alike. Each analyzed question was explained in purpose and answers (from participants) to provide clarity.

Leaders of today would need to cultivate leaders of tomorrow that could not only solve problems but meet unforeseen problems in the future, which meant building leaders that understand not only humanity but the importance of humanity in all existence within the universe – as applied to education. The questions discussed and analyzed in Chapter Four were explicitly limited to only the questions asked and approved within the study, previously identified as interview questions one through 10 on the initial research proposal. Research findings provided insight into supporting themes found in trend within the study such as the need for empathetic leadership, a theme two where participant answers and testimony shared called for a sense of humanity and community within educational buildings. Furthermore, the study data showed a growing trend shared by participants, where the understanding of universal position should be aligned with the total value of humans as fully sentient, existential beings. Theme five showed that participants need leadership action.

Moreover, the sixth trending theme in the study data showed that participants also shared a sense of worthlessness within education. Thus calling for theme seven, which tasks educational leaders with providing reform and change within school organizations. The eight theme discusses performance as a contributing factor to teacher attrition. Same thing for theme nine,

where participants shared a deep concern for the involvement of technology, the overuse and recent digital components to standardized assessments within education, and a fear of being replaced by artificial intelligence. Ending with theme ten, where participants call for togetherness and express their willingness to work alongside their leaders for the betterment of progression in human education. The participants within the study existed most in the fourth chapter of the study. Where their answers would be able to support the literary findings on the topic, but also allowing the participants to share their voices with educational leaders. Chapter Four also covers any supplementary findings, and the two primary research questions. Allowing for further analysis of the limitations within the study as well as the possible implications and use of the information within the study. Likewise, Chapter Four led to closure in the results, meanwhile allowing the study to look deeper discussions into the themes surrounding each of the two research questions as well as the implications from the study for analysis and possible use.

Chapter Five

Summary, Discussion, and Implications

Introduction

Increasing teacher attrition rates and declining numbers in student proficiency were often daily, monthly, and yearly issues for the average educational leader. The importance of developing an exploratory study that can give educators insight into what may altruistically lead to teacher attrition may allow educators to solve a plethora of systemic problems, including declining student proficiency scores. By impact, districts have also seen a decline in rising educational leaders. Educational leaders understand that there was no other place to look but to themselves when dealing with ever-changing policies and demands and the stated attrition and proficiency issues. Education has become a profession where two-thirds plus of those who come in as teachers, end up quitting before retirement (Anonymous, 2022).

The issues and current problems in education have been building generationally; this insight has been proven to be expected in the answers shared by participants within this study. The idea was that there was a snowball effect currently to the past issues within education. To many educators, the pressures of these demands were too much to bear, and by insight shared through this study, the current educational leader may not be equipped to answer and/or deal with such problems. Let alone the unforeseen but expected future problems, which some participants explain can range from too much student power to too little student support, meaning – little to no balance, if any, in education. The lacking balance within the power structures of districts and schools has attributed to what some report to have been 55% of educators in 2022 stating that they would rather leave their educational profession than retire as planned (Querolo et al., 2022).

Understanding that the pressures in education cannot be so without understanding how they each affected one another. The study provided insight into educator experiences and thinking. Case by case, interview by interview, it was evident in the answers that educators feel tired, voiceless, lacking support, and burned out. Many participants within the study supported what has been stated in other study reports related to teacher morale, which showed that faculty members consistently gave low satisfaction ratings to their districts related to salaries, policies, and administrative leadership (Oberman, 2005). For these simple reasons and many more, educators leave the field. For the same reasons and more, educational leaders also leave leadership. Most of the training provided by districts cannot keep up with each demand and address each other named and unnamed pressures with training that provide a certificate, but usually, not permanent solutions – according to participants. The future issues require educational leaders to wear not only a planetary scope but to take ownership of universal presence and its impact on the overall preservation of humanity.

If leaders of today and the future can address some of these needs, perhaps educators could get a grip on the number of teachers leaving. Perhaps educators could change how districts train assistant principals, principals, build curriculum, and train new teachers. The limitations on what could be done with such insight as the one in this study are endless, more importantly, if applied to a larger scale sampling and/or group. The hopes of this study also included the continuance of further research, which would help build educational leaders that best fit the needs of educators and education. Not only in the United States but globally, impacting humanity within the realm of public education. Participants within this study also shared one commonality, they all have to constantly attend state and district training for a certain amount of hours to keep their certification.

However, when it comes to leaders within their buildings, the issue was not the same. For instance, one participant stated that their assistant principal and principal do not have to attend as many trainings once they gain their educational leadership degrees. This is alarming to them because it gave the impression that districts hardly provide any training besides training that maintains compliance with educational leaders within the administrative ranks. If leaders were not being trained to improve in academic areas and motivated to creatively seek academic propensities which promote educational practices, then were they educational leaders? In one interview with a participant that was an administrator, it became very evident that administrators at some districts were not being trained enough to explore and master instructional strategies as much as they were being trained to conduct fire drills within their buildings.

The problem with lacking training of educational leaders and instructors was that there was a loss of focus on the development of the human mind. Antiquated strategies and the repetitive wheel of highly effective teaching strategies have not shown much of a pay off in the movement of performance data (measured by state standardized tests) within students nationwide. Yet little has been done to reform the way intelligence and learning were measured since the beginning of the twentieth century, back when multiple-choice school tests were created to mimic the tests given in the military to soldiers in the early 1900s (Von & Bennett, 2017). However, a lot has been done to the ramifications and improvements of multiple-choice tests, with the exclusion of the addition of computers, applications, and artificial intelligence components to aid in data analysis and processing. There was little evidence that much has been done to promote modalities of measurement that allow educators to measure learning and intelligence in more prominent and acceptable forms.

The educator of today as one of the participants in the study best said it, survives for the performance of tomorrow. One argument posed was that there was little room for creative progression when motivation was driven by survival. For educators and learners, performance-based evaluation has been validated as healthy competition, but the lacking balance in treatment between those who perform well and those who do not seem to show that there was no health in such competition. As one participant mentioned during the interview question about foreseeable problems in education, education for many has lost the ability of thought. The participant mentioned that the curriculum they were to teach was linear, bound by state statutes, mandates, and legalities that did not promote the extension of thinking for his students but instead the extension of memorization. The participant continued to give an example of evaluative feedback given by one of his administrators, posing the argument that the instructor did not do a good enough job with monitoring. An example of the exchange in conversation can be seen below, which illustrates a certain lack of humanity in treatment for both the instructor and the learner:

Administrator: "How do you know that they know what you taught?"

Participant (instructor): "Well sir, I asked them questions and they were answering them"

Administrator: "Yes but, some of those answers where choral responses, maybe next time you could try using a digital component to help you track individual answers?"

Participant (instructor): "Yes, absolutely, I will try that next time, perhaps it will work"

Administrator: "Teaching them to know the answer means that they need to show you they know the answer"

The participant stopped at that portion of the story and continued with his point. Stating that there was little room for thinking anymore in the classroom and that even discussions with partners, or the use of digital components within the classrooms, were given as a tool to measure

memorization not thought process. The participant went on, “I could give scenarios, change up the way they can show me what the right answer was but that was what I constantly find myself asking, what was the right answer?” The participant stressed that he yearned for a day when he would be looking for thoughts, ideas, new ways of thinking, and solutions to problems posed in real-world settings that did not require the repetition of memorized knowledge as an incantation. The participant continued and stressed that the foreseeable problem with education that he found to be most concerning was the death of thought. Moreover, what humanity was exemplified in such testimony of a real-life event where the educational leader was asking the teacher, “just teach them the right answers to pass their tests”? The idea of thought and the understanding in depth of knowledge should be measured in multiple ways since one of the realities of being a functioning human being was having the ability to solve unforeseen problems, not just to memorize information without application to varying realities and possibilities.

Practical Assessment of Study Analysis

The 15 participants were committed educators from different stakeholding areas in educational buildings. The issues ranged from needing new teachers to not having enough resources. In between, some participants also mentioned the government policies impacting their districts and how hard it was for some of them to function normally within the curriculum. Being that it was Florida, some of the concerns to political demands range from the inability to use certain cultural words within the classroom to having only to maintain approved books within their libraries.

Other items of concern within this study include the participant's concerns for the development of future educational leaders that can understand the ever-changing demands and challenges. The data analyzed from this exploratory study also showed a deep concern for

student development within the confines of what was believed to be an overwhelming curriculum that has to be delivered (according to participants) within a concise time frame. Participants shared in commonality a concern for developing a curriculum that allowed schools to build educated humans that could solve human problems, placing less of a concern for raising students that could pass tests. Regarding the lowering proficiency rates on all subject areas in various districts, participants hope that district leaders focus more on building assessments that were more aligned with one another instead of various assessments within the same unit that come from different programs and were often not aligned. Thus, the importance of the works in this study hopes to help educators of the future address such expressed concerns as applied to the two research questions in focus.

The practical assessment of the study analysis included the close evaluation of the data derived from the study results. The role of the individual conducting the study as an analyst called for the processing of interview data that pointed to shared trends and commonalities among participants. The commonalities shared by participants were then applied and compared to the interview questions within the study. The data compiled from the interview questions developed a framework of language that translated the overall message of the participants individually and as one entity combined. Wherein practicality, the findings within the study illustrate that all participants share a concern about the decline of education. Though some participants seem hopeful, most of them continue to stay in the profession with hopes that their works will make enough of an impact and change to improve the quality of life not just for their students, but for humanity as a whole.

It was important to maintain and develop foundational language within the study that could provide a flatline baseline for the evaluation of the language used by participants in

meaning, by pressing for examples to be used within the questions asked. The inclusion of open-ended questions allowed the exploratory methods of the study to expand on the trends shared by the participants meanwhile avoiding assumptions. Minimizing the risk of any organic deviation from the expressed truth from the participants and capturing the humanistic value in their answers, meanwhile maintaining such humanity through the translation and transcription process. The use of the interview questions to support the research questions allowed for better analysis of the data and provided more accuracy within its reporting.

Research Question One

The first research question asked participants according to education practitioners, what specific human qualities are likely to exist among future existential educational leaders. To understand this research question or the answers to this question, educators must look at the answers from interview questions one through five and ten. It was important to keep in mind that the answers to question ten impact both research questions.

The formulation and thought process behind the first research question was to directly address the desired wants and needs of educators. Giving each participant a voice. However there was another purpose as well behind the formulation of this question, the purpose being that asking about human qualities in relation to leaders would allow districts, schools, and educational leaders alike to have an opportunity to understand the human components at stake. The ability of leaders to recognize humanity was just as important as the depth of the answers provided by the participant. From the words used by the participant to the definition of each word, in conjunction and comparison to the experiences shared by participants. Research question number one allowed information to be transferred and shared in a manner that typically

would not happen within the walls of an educational building, due not only to lacking anonymity but also to policies in place within districts.

Moreover, the components in research question number one are also tied into the literary findings on the subject of humanism. Proving that humans often seek to find themselves as existential, living, actual parts of their surroundings – this ideally would include, work (Zhao, 2015). Research question number one was also developed under the understanding that deep thinking, comes from perceptive, relative, and reflective thought. Humans yearn for a sense of belonging and separate themselves from other species by attaching purpose to their existence (Aloni, 1997).

Theme One: Empathy. The analysis of the first interview question showed with specificity that participants wanted empathetic, humble, honest, brave, fair, and problem-solving leaders. Further provides support to the ideology that humans strive for leaders that share common humanistic qualities and maintain that connection to such qualities as a reminder that “much of what happens to human beings and to the world that they inhabit was the result of human actions and therefore involves human responsibility” (Fassin, 2019, p. 37). A specific example given by one participant honed in on the importance of humility when a visit from an executive area director to their school building brought along the superintendent of the district. The participant said that they leaned in to shake hands with the superintendent, in awe of meeting them and excited for their visit to the school, but that the teacher (participant) was turned away by the superintendent and executive area director on the handshake. Something as simple as a handshake can carry such an impactful meaning from one human to the next.

Theme one showed the importance of empathy to the human, by further supporting through participant answers that the way humans treat other humans is far more important than

any other exchange between one human and another. Moreover, theme one gave insight to educational leaders that lacking empathy in the workplace has increased turnover rates in education (Kurt, 2021). Theme one also supports the idea that behaviors impact interest. Exemplifying through participant answers that it has been the behavior of leaders in the workplace that has led to employees lacking interest in the organization (Von, 2020).

Theme Two: Humanity & Community. The inclusion of the second interview question gave examples of what humanism means to you. Allowed the exploratory study to examine the understanding of the word humanity among participants. While some participants had never heard the word before, others sought to look right at the root of the word. The unanimous answer by participants was that humanism was the ability to find commonalities within humans from all walks of life, be it in one place, from one person to another, or many to each other. Theme two was identified through shared human characteristics stated by participants throughout the study, such as a shared culture within the educational building (Svetelj, 2014). The overall insight into the connection between humanism and education was that “for students to become successful, engaged leaders, attention to their individuality and flexibility of curriculum design need to be the main focus” (Zucca-Scott, 2010, p. 34). Interview question number two also allowed the participants to internally evaluate not only how education has shaped humanity but how it has impacted them. Creating a sense of intrinsic connection between their impact, but also of educators in their own life throughout their careers as students and educators.

One particular participant gave an example of a pre-planning meeting, where their instructional coach broke the news to them that they would have to teach three different preps due to master schedule needs. The teacher had prepped all summer long for one prep, now during pre-planning under new leadership, the master schedule had been changed. Instead of leaving the

planning to the teacher (participant) alone, the instructional coach told them they would split the planning pacing charts for the three preps and plan together accordingly. The gesture of help and support alone from the instructional coach was what kept the participant teaching in the building that year. According to the participant, the leadership and humanity of the instructional coach exemplified in their ability to just suffer with them thought planning was enough to not make them feel hopeless and alone. Again, human emotions and thoughts come to light as important mega factors that directly impacted attrition and retention. Something as simple as a helping hand in leadership, another example of a simple act of service, kept the teacher motivated enough to stay in the profession. Participants shared that having a sense of community and humanity allowed them to feel as if their actions mattered within the workplace. Further supporting definitions of humanism which identify a sense of community as a universal component shared by humans (Zhao, 2015).

Theme Three: Sentient Existence. The third interview question was, give examples of what existentialism means to you. An important question is included in the interview process to support the component of the relative self within the first research question. For someone to want and need something, they need to understand that they exist, matter and that others around them do. Then they need to understand the capacity to which they exist and how the *what* of their actions impacts their *why*. Humans tend to look for reason within their existence, validation, and meaning in their existence. The third interview question allowed participants and stakeholders to understand the importance of their existence, which in turn, allowed the study to dive deeper into what was and may be intrinsically important to themselves and each other in education. More importantly, this question allowed the answer to research question number one to include the conceptual understanding of the wants and needs of “the individual concerning the collective and

the relationship between the two” (Lawler, 2005, p. 217). Answering the question of existentialism also allowed the participant to make a connection between their universal existence, the magnitude of defined intelligence throughout the universe, what that means today, and what it also may look like in the future.

The constant measurement of one’s actions, achievements, and purpose was important to the self-perception of human value. Some research poses the idea that organizations need to constantly align the value of human life to the level of their performance, for instance posing questions like “how are people adding current and future value to stakeholders?” (Mayo, 2001, p. 13). Such a thought process can be dangerous, because people should add value to other people in terms of performance, yes, but no human life was more worth than another. The ideology that *human* needs to be replaced, w something organizations and educational establishments perhaps need to rephrase. When in actuality it was the performance that needed to be replaced, and in turn, perhaps it was training that needs to take place and proper management/development of such performances. Theme three also allowed the educator to understand that as sentient beings, humans within the workplace often equate their performance to their value, which directly can impact their level of happiness within the workplace (Benevene et al., 2019). Not to call for easier evaluations of performance, but instead calling for better coaching and instructional training for growth from educational leaders.

Theme Four: Actions. The fourth interview question asked participants to give examples of how can leaders create a high level of impact. Which contains wording that cultivates exploratory research and led to answers that were supported with examples of how participants perceive and perceive educational leaders—in totality. For participants to express their wants and needs regarding an educator's quality, they could use examples from successful leaders they had

throughout their careers and/or unsuccessful leaders throughout their careers. More importantly, allowing the first research question to include examples of how educators were impacted and motivated; though some of them may or may not be parents, they have been around students within their buildings, and be it consciously or sub-consciously, it was this impact and “how they use their knowledge to make it possible to bequeath to their offspring [students] a liveable world” (Soudien, 2018, p. 319). The fourth interview question also directly impacts the severe understanding of attrition and what has led to a decline or rise in cultures within schools. Allowing the participant to give first-hand accounts of experiences that molded not just them but others around them, experiences that though individually shared, allowed the study to share trends within experiences related to cultural developments and their correlation to leadership strategies used (Wright, 2009).

One participant specifically used an example of post-planning techniques used by one of their more successful principals. Shedding light on something that the principal called “hotwash meetings” the participant explained that the principal held meetings post-planning that included vertical and horizontal aligned department meetings where teachers could openly share and administration, things that worked and things that did not work during the year. The purpose of these meetings was to avoid making the same mistakes in the coming year. The participant continued to state that at first, the meetings became complaint sessions, but with ramifications of norms and professionalism standards placed by the principal, the meetings became healthy, safe spaces where the teachers could share insight that even included data, and promoted healthy communications that harbored and protected successful strategies used. Theme four focused on stressing the importance of cultivating cultural growth within the instructional staff, through the actions of leaders (De Lissovoy, 2015).

Theme Five: Worthless. The first research question also included interview question five, which was probably the most essential and influential question to its answer: What has led to teacher attrition? The answers to this question ranged from lacking pay to lacking support, even to lacking curriculum knowledge by their supervisors, which negatively impacted their evaluations. Most of the verbose portions of the interviews came from this question in the study. Participants stressed that the items leading to their attrition were often issues their immediate leaders never addressed. Often it was not something outside the school building but something directly and easily attached to their schools. With so many districts and states lacking the human power to serve the demand in students needed to be taught, districts were even (for example) calling on unlicensed veterans to step into classrooms (such as Florida) to take on the challenge of educating the youth. Moreover, the spouses of veterans can also do the same. Finding creative and arguably non-traditional ways to get more professionals into the classroom was now at a level that can debatably have not been reached before.

Interview question number 10, how can educational leaders solve the current and future problems in education? This interview question (impacts both research questions) was applied to the first research question by providing insight into what educators need to be fixed, have not had or seen fixed, and perhaps even predict as new rising issues that have yet to be addressed. Once again, relating not only to the first research question but also to other interview questions, such as question five. Most participants expressed that educational leaders' inability to provide security was quite a burden to carry as educators. All participants expressed a collective sense of anxiety regarding the future of education. Some question, even the involvement of leadership in education concerning human interaction, would the training be more AI-led? Could education take the route of computer-based learning, leaving instructors to be a thing of the past? Questions

that have created what-if scenarios for educators may seem irrational, but the level of high stress among educators has been steadily climbing since the introduction of artificial intelligence within the classroom (Sparks, 2023). Interview question number 10 allowed the study to maintain open ends when it concludes that there was hope for individual perspective in what needs to happen and what needs to come within the study findings.

One participant explained that the use of what they called “extreme technology” in their opinion was leading to a detrimental decline in the thinking process of humans. The dependency on artificial intelligence and technology was leading to lower scores due to the inability of humans to calculate using their minds. Moreover, the use of search engines has also led (in their opinion) to a reduction in the level of reading and the amount of reading by students (Zucca-Scott, 2010). The participant also included, that the use of texting (in their opinion) as a strategy to answer questions in class through an application provided by the district to “increase engagement and monitoring” led to a decline in the student’s ability to write properly, since most students wanted to use language that was not conducive to testing and/or content-based information. Essentially, the participant explained that they have noticed a decline in the quality of language and the proficiency of reading in students due to the constant use of artificial intelligence and the assisted totality in learning provided by artificial intelligence and/or applications. Participants worry that in essence the place of the teacher and the learner could perhaps someday lose its place within classrooms since research has recently supported that perhaps “every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence can in principle be so precisely described that a machine can be made to simulate it” (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019, p. 3).

Research Question Two

Research question two asked, how can educators develop better future existential leaders? By explicitly identifying, the current human and universal needs in education. Given the historical and current problems in education, it was essential to understand that the strides made by leaders in the past were not failures. However, educators should also understand that failure to adjust to changing times would often result in not only repeating the same mistakes made in the past but may create more problems and lead to no solutions. Public education was in a state of emergency when it comes to the leaders of tomorrow; with ever-growing changes in society and policies, the leaders of tomorrow in education must be able to deal with globalized humanity, more so now than ever before. The second interview question allowed the study to provide some truth to districts that perhaps allowed them to develop and train leaders that can meet the needs of tomorrow, even if those problems and needs were unpredictable.

Moreover, the second research question was developed with the purpose of problem-solving. Not just for districts to develop better trainings and better leaders, but to actually provide educational leaders with the real concerns shared by their instructional staff. Furthermore, by providing a sense of prediction, in order to become proactive with reform and effective with changes in the future. Allowing educational leaders to also have a perspective on morality, where the care for humans is at the center of the reform. Including the answers from lived experiences would not only provide the leaders and districts with perspective but also empathy. The second research question focused on mirroring the moral foundations expressed by humans within the same buildings, working under a different power structure than the leader (D'Orville, 2015).

Theme Six: Change. Surrounded by unclear understandings of unexplained results, along with changes (whether inside or outside the classrooms) educational leaders could use some help. It was a daunting task and a lonely chair that of the principal. The second research question provided some hope and solutions for the future. Interview question number six: What keeps you in education? Contained answers that included examples from participants, which pointed directly to the value of human relationships. One participant mentioned the wedding invitation from a previous student who was now a full-grown adult. Yet another participant gave an example where they had a student who had been in a car crash. The student was hospitalized and had to do hospital homebound education. Every day, in the afternoon after their day of teaching, the participant would drive over to the student's parents and deliver the assignment to the parent's employment establishment. In hopes that the student would not only complete the work but gain their health and be able to come back to school without missing a beat. The ability to cope with change is something that effective educators and educational leaders alike should possess (Wright, 2009).

Another participant gave examples of how during the COVID-19 pandemic, they volunteered at the school during the unpaid portion of their summer, to hand out food bags to students in their surrounding Title I community. The participant went on to describe countless days where they stood in the sun, rain, and heat of the season passing out bags to incoming families, sometimes 100 plus per day. Hopefully, the answers to the reported interview question could help districts build training modules and components that allow leaders to protect and hone those reasons that keep educators in education. Particularly because the field of education was one that has so many unmeasurable intrinsic rewards to the educator (Ihensekien, 2004). Unlike many other professions, humanity in education has arguably been one of the highest forms of

humanity in terms of impact, of any existing profession. Moreover, the ability of educators to take on change has shown that there are components to education that are far more complex than pedagogy (Burke, 2018).

Theme Seven: Hope. Research question two also included the answers from interview question seven: give examples of qualities you currently see in educational leaders. Interview question seven directly impacts research question number two as question number two focused on developing future leaders. There was no better way to understand how to build future leaders than to gain insight into what current educators need and what educators have historically needed, allowing leaders to find the frequency of needs and correlation of needs. The ability to see what has been deemed a good leader was essential to understanding the type of leader districts were building within education. It was imperative that the exploratory limitations of the study focus, allow participants to expand on the type of leaders and their styles, their strategies, and their tactics (Black, 2001). Allowing the lens to look at what districts were released as parts of their training, which in turn should be a reflection of their mission, vision, and overall goals as districts.

If there was a unanimous shared disconnect between what leaders say to what leaders do (which is evident in participant research data) then districts need to do a better job of developing language that shares flatline, well-defined meaning and was understood equally from one educational leader to the next. The dangerous behaviors come when words mean something different from one person to the next. This was why it was important in this research to include some numbers that could provide support to the qualitative trends in the exploratory research. Given that the answers range in terms of expression, depth, and exemplification of words used within the examples given, there has to be a flatline definition in a language shared within

participants that gave a baseline for words used that can be attached to qualities (Maxwell, 2007). Similarly, training created by districts needs to maintain objectivity, and aligned, meanwhile keeping an open mind to new thoughts, but the language should not be used subjectively when it comes to terms such as servitude, humility, empathy, and essentially human shared behaviors within educational buildings.

A fair example of this was the example given by one of the participants of the word “love” and another example was given by another participant for the word “care” The participant mentioned that leaders should be caring, yet, when one of his students hit their head during PE at the school and had a concussion, the student went collapsed, the principal called for a nurse but while the nurse was on the way, the principal did not provide any support to the student. The participant then asked the principal why he had not provided any care during the event, the principal simply replied “well we don’t want to be held liable”, which in turn yes, true but according to the participant, the same principal has to choose at some point if the life of a student was worth saving or if liability was worth saving. Easier said than done in terms of decision-making, but the point that the participant was perhaps trying to make was that educators need more training for the unexpected, human events that can happen in schools. It was a bit hard for one participant to understand, why in the year 2023, educators were more keen to use technology in the classroom to help a student think, than to use strategies in a building that may help a student survive head trauma. As the participant best put it, at that point, educators are still waiting on the certified, liable, professional to be present (which makes total sense legally and medically) but improvements for support need to happen within school buildings.

Another example given by a participant was that of an active assailant event. Where educational leaders were put in impossible scenarios where they were tasked with keeping

students safe, in a building full of locked doors and breakable windows. The participant mentioned that while pioneering mental health support for surviving students, districts need to make sure that trained, certified staff members, besides school resource officers, provide some sort of responsive security with immediate urgency to the situation. Waiting minutes for police arrival means lives and in the freedom of American country, there was no doubt better can be done. The idea was to explore more options and maintain an open mind to developing training that best supports leaders and schools. Theme seven also ultimately allowed districts and educational leaders to understand the importance of developing realistic trainings (Miller, 2012).

Theme Eight: Performance. Interview question number eight asked, what problems do you currently see in education? This exploratory qualitative study addresses trending issues that educators within the profession share as current problems. Adding to research question number two, insight into problems that need to be explicitly addressed by today's leaders. For example, they placed importance on testing over most things. The importance was what districts and educators would do with this information. Since this was an identified problem, shared in commonality, there was no need to find commonality within language (Von & Bennett, 2017). Interview question eight allowed the study to also expand the following, have the leaders that districts placed into schools been able to deal with and tackle the challenges faced? Something that cannot be ignored was how the past shapes the future.

Educational leaders of yesterday should mirror in action the efforts made to solve and deal with the demands of the past. Likewise, allowing participants to share their own experiences supports that their actions were successful and not successful with specificity (Miller, 2012). Meeting the needs of people means that the ability to serve them aligns with the needs of not only the times but the people. However, in the current case of the earth, it can be argued that the

current needs of the earth have always included the need to help maintain the planet and its functioning healthy systems alive. An educated society can do this; an appropriately educated society would most likely not be able to function within healthy limits or meet demands posed by Earth's current and future humans.

The answers to this question point more toward local issues, regional issues, national issues, and global issues. The question presses on the premise that perhaps there needs to be a focus placed on the building of a curriculum that supports the longevity of humanity. Meaning, the curriculum needs to address real-world problems, not just historical information and the formation of systematic components in society (Jones et al., 2014). One participant used the example of one of the years when he took 8 of his students along with administration and parents abroad for a summer educational trip to India. The instructor was able to show the students the scarcity of water in other countries, being that it was an environmental policy class, the instructor was able to show the students firsthand the impact of the usage of water in other regions of the world as opposed to the scarcity of water in other regions of the world like India.

The participant continued, explaining that the students cried during the trip, smiled during the trip, shared laughs and sadness with the locals, and learned about their culture. Experiences such as these were not only educational but also imperative to maintaining humanity throughout the world. The students came back to the United States, full of knowledge on new filtration methods for water, but also, with the knowledge of new data and statistics, as well as lived experience, first hand of a real-world problem. According to the participant, some of the students in his class went on to go to medical school, others became lawyers and others became environmental scientists, that currently work for the environmental protection agency.

The participant mentions that he often wondered, had he not taken the risk of taking that trip with his selected students, would they be in the walks of life they were in today? Giving further support to his idea that education was a humanistic expression of life in its totality. From beginning to end, from students entering as young kindergartners to grown adults that were continuing with their doctoral degrees, education should be a part of life and it should be used as a way to solve world problems, not just to provide economic support and industrial production (Mayo, 2001).

Theme Nine: Technology. Interview question nine asked, what problems do you foresee in the future of education? Allowing districts and states to take a pulse on issues that current and future educators find as immediate dire need-solution problems. Adding on to research question number two, much-needed data on actual, perceived, and felt issues shared by current and future educators. Allowing districts to shape once again and create trainings that promote the development of future leaders who can deal with tomorrow's problems (Moses, 1992). In turn, working with the other questions posed through the study, question nine allowed the participant to truly hone in on the possibilities of rising problems if certain needs were unmet. The future of education is just and perhaps only as important as the challenges of education. Future education leaders should be equipped with the training and possess (or tame) the abilities that allow them to properly and effectively function as public servants.

Participants expressed their worry about replacement. Meaning, would they one day be replaced by machines or applications that can do exactly what they do and not be tended to as humans should (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). The idea that a computer or a program can function at the same realistic capacity or even better than a human, to teach another human,

scares them. Educators of today and educational leaders of tomorrow need to be cognizant of what the use of artificial intelligence in terms of replacement can do to the nature of humanity.

One participant brought about a good point, if the demand for technology grows the acceptance for its usage may be needless. Examples of this can be seen in the medical field where it is estimated that “it will be at least one more decade before we see this technology take over and have an effect on jobs” (Korzep, 2010, p. 357). The question to ask then was how many years until educators saw technology take over jobs in their field and was it up to the human leader to protect humanity in education? For, then, naturally, the argument to pose or support would be that as a people humans were evolving into a world where the human of tomorrow could learn through the codes of machines or create coded reality, instead of the stories, examples, and experiences shared by mankind. One participant mentioned that for human problems, there need to be human solutions and for machine problems there need to be human solutions. Interesting take, but eye-opening to say the least.

Another participant honed in on the issue regarding standardized testing and its comparison to strategies used in the classroom to teach. Claiming that education as a whole was a teach-to-the-test method, regardless of how one wants to cut it. The participant gave an example of programs she uses in her classroom, all promoted by her district, and disturbingly enough, the participant claimed that if he did not use the programs to monitor his instruction, his evaluations would be low in terms of performance results. The participant mentioned programs like Kahoot, Read 180, Nearpod, Socrative, and Quizziz, all monitoring programs that allow students to either learn through self-paced question-and-answer sessions or programs that require the student to answer questions within a timed session. All programs according to the participant, measured knowledge attainment, but the participant could not stress enough the following:

“Im paid to teach them information, not to teach them how to think. They were allowed to think in terms of applying their information to scenarios, but the answers were always the same. Almost pre-determined”

The insight in his testimony was telling as he continued to explain that he wished he could have the student think more freely. Given that humans are thinking beings. The participant's claims further support historical research on the topic of humanism, that humans as sentient beings are constantly wanting to gain knowledge to create. Yet in the case of most curriculum content in public schools, the goal was to teach students how to pass and be proficient.

Theme Ten: Togetherness. Interview question number ten also adds to research question number two as well. Directly connecting the entire research to the interview, how can districts best develop leaders of tomorrow? Since question number one addresses the qualities, question two focused on the needed components to develop future education leaders. However, this brings about the topic of language, not just the perspective of the self, existentialism, and the understanding of humanism. Instead, it highlights the need for humanity within the classroom, schools, districts, and leadership. Educational leaders should strive all efforts to harbor strategies “increasing the humanity of the classroom in efforts to reconstruct educational relationships in the post-war world” (Burke, 2018, p. 258).

One weary participant has been an educator for 40 years. Cleaned her room during the interview. Though asked to sit down countless times, she insisted that cleaning was the only thing that made sense after long days of teaching. She ate her sandwich while she cleaned her board. Shamefully mentioned that she hadn't eaten all day and if it was ok if she ate during the interview. She stopped herself as she chewed and pointed at a place on her globe in her class. She pointed at Afghanistan. She asked, “Did you know that there are schools in parts of the

world where women are not allowed to teach still?” Pressing on with her narrative, she mentioned that she found it peculiar that so many nations got involved with the middle east during the 1990s and early 2000s for oil, but not many pushed for the empowerment of women in these societies.

Her wish, she mentioned, was that perhaps in this country, she could empower more girls and boys to become educators and maybe one of them would travel to places in the middle east and fight for the rights of women. Explaining then that she had done more teaching about the impact of prices in oil and GDP than she had about women’s rights in the region of the middle east. She laughed almost sadly saying, that perhaps she would go, but then again, she probably couldn’t and if she could she probably wouldn’t be able to afford it on her salary, or able to do much as a woman in the region. Another interesting take on the question, but eye-opening nonetheless. Were the points presented by the exploratory measures of the qualitative study once again focused on perspective? The participant was calling for togetherness, for a mission by educators to globally unite and fight for issues that have constantly diminished the value of human life on earth (Von, 2020).

What a commendable perception, an insight of valor to the profession of education. Perhaps also quite the maverick of ideologies, that one simple educator from an unknown place could touch the soil in another location of her planet and set fire to freedom in the ideologies of democracy. In the ideologies of equality, and for the propensities that press at the fibers of her humanity – that hearts have value such as souls do for God (Lawler, 2005). Calling for educators to do more about saving humanity and earth as if a calling ordained by a higher faith. The exploratory qualitative descriptive research data in this study points at the self within the educator, to find within, all humanity and do whatever can be done to protect it.

Supplementary Findings

The study has general trends, from each and both of the perspective research questions and multiple interview questions. A constant looming sense that teachers and root-level educators were losing autonomy. An overwhelming fear that artificial intelligence could take over the world of education and do away with the human elements. Participants all mentioned the introduction of technology as an alarmingly fast phenomenon that was by far taking the role of the teacher out of the classroom and hallways and bringing in applications as replacements. For instance, the use of behavior redirection applications, the use of digital quizzes, and/or digital monitoring tools. The participants worried about technology, went on to point out that currently, technology mostly still needs human prompting. However, the same participants that stated that most technology still needs human prompting were the ones worried that artificial intelligence could one day render the human teacher useless. Moreover, teachers share a high sense and level of community. Stressing the fact that they need to feel like they belong, have specific roles, jobs, purposes, goals, evaluations, and feedback that allows them or pushes them to grow.

Other findings and trends show that educators were concerned with the abundance of testing. The importance placed on performance and the correlation between their value, existence within the profession, and the performance of pre-mature, non-adult, children. Kids that were not fully developed emotionally, mentally, or physically enough to withstand three to four hours of testing in rooms with three bathroom breaks and perhaps two snacks per session. Each session of testing perhaps contains 100 +/- multiple choice questions, all on content taught between 45 to 60 minutes blocks of time, sometimes 7 times a day for 180+/- days a year. Taking into account learning needs, disabilities, and language barriers, not to mention the unknown variables of

domestic functions and/or living conditions within their domiciles. Such concerns were presented by the participants interviewed. Where one participant used themselves as an example, that they too have hardships and learning needs, but they were 100% responsible for teaching 100% of the curriculum, 100% of the time, accurately to 100% of their students – regardless of the conditions and/or limitations.

The study data showed a need for academic freedom, where educators were thirsty for autonomy and presence in their classrooms. However, this comes from the educators within the industry that can be considered true educators and instructors. Since the field has become inundated with individuals that arguably do not have the needed experience to be in the field at the instructional capacity. Take for instance the state of Florida, making strides to create pathways within policy that allow for individuals that were not necessarily trained educators to become public school teachers at a faster rate than they could in years past. One of the major concerns for the educator of today, according to the analyzed data in this study, was their shared sentiment of lacking a voice. Participants within this study shared in one way or another, stories that illustrated not only their feeling of being unappreciated but also unheard.

One participant in particular mentioned that he cannot remember any time in the past thirty years of his teaching career in the public school system when he was asked to give his thoughts on educational policies, before their implementation. The same participant was also a college professor, he works two jobs. The participant teaches at a public middle school and also teaches night classes at one of the biggest public universities in the state. Yet, even with that, not only does he hardly make enough money to make ends meet with his family of three, but also feels as if he lacks any voice to make a dent in educational reform.

Every single participant was elated to be a part of this exploratory study, primarily because for most of them it was the very first time someone asked them what they thought about education and educational issues. This raises some red flags regarding the creation of educational policies, and brings about thoughts that perhaps should be posed for the betterment of educational reform; imagine if states created more platforms for policies where teachers “would receive adequate salaries, benefits, and facilities and would share in deliberations over educational policy” (Bok, 2017, p. 176).

Limitations of the Study

The qualitative limitations of the study begin with the interviews being conducted between humans, where bias and opinion may sometimes meet. Though The study's position was natural, participants' answers include bias to their examples of leadership and qualities based on their prerogatives. Other study limitations encompass the sampling size; for a qualitative study, 15 participants were acceptable, but a quantitative study could potentially allow for a broader pool of participants from whom to gather answer samples. Another limiting factor was location; this study was conducted in Florida, where perhaps a broader region and or multiple regions and places of the study could and would provide different answers, trends, qualities, and concerns as answers within the study. One final limitation was language; though best efforts were made to create a defined language regarding attributes and qualities (comparable within discussed answers with participants), there may be a difference in what one person deems an unfavorable quality, experience, etc.

The limitations of the study once again include the fact that the study was not expert reviewed nor pilot tested. The individual conducting the study was not an expert. The size of the interview pool, though 15 could be expanded to include a broader sampling. The location change

or broadened could also bring about different findings. The interviews 30 to 45 minutes in length could be increased to provide longer samplings. The quality of the questions and the number of questions changed to provide a different research approach instead of an exploratory approach. The exploratory nature of the study limited the study to chance and unpredictability to the limitations of the experiences and thinking of the participants.

Implications for Future Study

Hope was one of the main fruits of this exploratory qualitative study. Educators should find answers within the study that can help them make much-needed changes in education, from the training and development of leaders to internal cultural strategies that foster positive atmospheres. Developing leaders with ideal qualities was a task that can be honed easier than finding leaders with good qualities. Moreover, the study could allow for future issues to be more predictable and solvable. Implications for the future include (but were not limited to) providing districts with information that may allow them to retain teachers, increase morale, increase proficiency scores, and improve curriculum.

However, the process of improvements and developments for the enhancement of the educational environment in the treatment of the educator as a human does not start with making sure they have better on-site leaders. The term better in itself can be defined in whatever manner by whichever district is under its mission and vision. The process of improvement and development for the enhancement in treatment of the educator as a human begins with existence. States and districts could perhaps retain educators if they listened and paid attention more to the simple needs of the current educator. A starting point by example can be seen in the answers provided by participants within this exploratory study.

However, providing a voice alone was also not enough in “amending the process of review to include these additional voices [and] does not guarantee that the basic structure would be altered or even discussed” (Bok, 2017, p. 179). Providing a voice but taking no action was something that educational leaders, districts, and states should steer away from when attempting to include teachers in the progressive reform of education. There has to be as one participant put it best, common ground. At some point, the demands, wants, and needs of the human instructor and educator meet with the demands wants, and needs of their districts. If and only if, by and large, and unanimous agreement, the true mission and vision of educators and districts were to provide the best educational environment and quality of curriculum for students and teachers alike.

The study suggests with support of participant evidence, that there have been pleas for the ramification of policies within the educational system. Policies at every impacting level of any governmental entity, as this study hoped to apply to any country of location without limitation to specific nations and/or geographic regions. The study also could be used to develop new policies, by allowing districts and boards to include the input of teachers if they have not been doing so already in practice. The study provided a lens into a small window of educators, but educators nonetheless.

Moreover, the study promotes the structure of school buildings where human principles exist to develop educational leaders that can solve global issues and develop students that do the same. Specific changes should also be made to promote the building of depth within school faculties. School districts should take pride in making changes and taking steps that “encourage efforts to create well-trained, full-time teaching faculties” (Bok, 2017, p. 175). The world was ever-growing with many issues that cannot heal or fix themselves; with the ever-increasing

economic changes, corporate demands would continue to change. However, the constant changes within society, humanity, and the environment call for leaders that can tackle more significant issues. Proficiency scores and standardized testing were the main factors driving teachers out of the profession, so they should be addressed. Leaders that abuse their power was also an issue that must be addressed. Lacking content knowledge among curriculum creators was also an issue that should be addressed. The educational leader's humanistic universal and existential presence stretches beyond the classroom. Considering that each living, breathing human existing within the universe learns in real-time from real people – needs beyond those that help meet assessment mastery should be met.

Likewise, this study promotes thinking, the open-minded ideology that learning would need to take many different forms within the bounds of humanity. The inclusion of technology, heed as a warning from current and past educators, not just in fear for their jobs, but in fear for the human of the future. Where education becomes a sterile flat-lined experience, and its dichotomy in practice goes only as far as the coded limitations within any artificial intelligence used to replace the human educator. The study promotes training that pushes for the adaptation of learning and teaching, adaptation to the new needs of tomorrow's humans.

One of the more important but also brighter implications of the study, may be a bit optimistic but hopeful nonetheless. The research questions, both one and two, allowed for participants to dig deep. The addition of the interview questions, allowed for further details to be shared within the parameters of the two research questions. However, the magnitude of the stories shared through the participant interviews compiled allows for a clear-glass look at the past, current, and possible future state of education. In hopes that the use of information in this

study be used for good works, the cultivation of humanism within educational institutions cannot and should not be overlooked.

Whereas in the past, according to presented study reports through the literary review, and supported through the findings in this study – it has been capitalism that has gained most from the losses in education. From the financial components which impact every single aspect of education, from federal to local, to the policies created at the macro and micro levels of educational districts. It has been capitalism that has gained the most in the centrality of economic focus and neglect for the centrality of humanity (Cole, 2006).

The people that worked within educational buildings, and learned within educational buildings have always had names. They have not been mere numbers, mere dollar signs. The neutrality of their treatment for the sake of progression has left humanity maimed and divided between those that usually could versus those who usually couldn't be based on their access to education, and/or proficiency within examinations. The implications of this study were to provide value to the educator and the learner, but also to the educational leader. Also, to the district and the local municipalities supporting such districts and schools. The implication of this study is to shine a light on the importance of every single living human within the fabric of education. Decisions made at the highest level of educational regimes, completely have always impacted the lowest grass root level of education at the local levels.

Summary

This study supports the idea that schools (through their organisms) directly impact the world. Each stakeholder was impacted directly by policy, instructional strategies, and leadership (at all levels). This study also supports the idea that education was the single most impactful of components within all social systems in humanity. The study brought about perspective and

insight into the influence of educators and the impact of educational leaders on and in education. The importance of acknowledging the needs and wants of stakeholders within school buildings is just as paramount as developing their leaders. Each district should, in part, altruistically align its leadership training to meet its mission goals and values as districts strive to meet the local demands of their surrounding communities, placing value on the importance of alignment. Understanding what drives teachers into and out of education was crucial to developing their leaders. Since educators help shape humanity, this phenomenon impacts the entire planet, not just the United States. Educators everywhere have to constantly adjust to the changes in society to the demands of governments and economies. The information in this study and study could allow people with power to develop solutions that may help those who do not have as much power.

From the treatment of educators to the treatment of students, this study presses for the betterment of the educational environment as a whole within buildings. The impact of grass root educational reform at the local level was just as important and impactful as the reform of globalized educational systems. The creation of educational reform where the treatment of the individual was not rendered to the performance of the individual and the value of the human was not equated to their ability. The reality was that educational leaders have for years, hired instructors only to underpay them. The requirements to become a teacher at this point in many states have been placed at what some would argue a low bar in public education. In hopes that with the current shortage of teachers, nationwide – someone would step up and step into the profession. The quality of training offered within the public education system has not improved much to meet the demands of humanity but instead, the training offered has been put in place to provide ethics and compliance to state political mandates.

The inclusion and addition of highly qualified training would in essence improve the quality of the performance of the educators involved in delivering instructional leadership and/or practice. However, such reform does cost money and also costs time. Something that government municipalities do not come easily across, particularly when the location of school buildings within districts were so closely tied to the taxation brackets of the housing market and zoning surrounding school buildings. Affording full-time instructors in the public education sector has for years included (for example in the state of Florida) bargaining of salaries that amount to less than twenty-five dollars a year in raises to full-time public educators. Yet, there was even a struggle at the college level when it comes to the development and retention of instructors. Since the problem of educator treatment does not solely exist at the public secondary school level, in the case of college educators one of the solutions to be rendered as hope would and could be to acknowledge and understand that in current research “knowledge accumulates about the adverse effects on the quality of education resulting from the hiring of large numbers of underpaid and badly treated part-time instructors” (Bok, 2017, p. 177).

Moreover, this study included information that, had the study never happened, may have never been heard. The first question immediately places humanity on the leader by asking what qualities they should have. By looking at the qualities in leaders, educators, and districts can make better leaders in the future, prepared to meet the demands of the future meanwhile making better decisions that not only preserve humanity in the outcome but also allow education to evolve with longevity, not just to meet the demands of economies and industries.

The second research question established a direct correlation between education and global issues, thereby attributing universal significance to its inquiry. Humanity's preservation depends on education, not just on this planet but among the stars. Placing value on the human as

an existential sentient being, faithfully giving weight to live, thought, feeling, and the development of all systems in place that can and should be taught formally or informally within or outside of schools as measurable of humanity's abilities and successes as a specie. It is arguably, a social responsibility for educators to do their best at preserving the attributes within humanity that suit best for progress meanwhile providing educated solutions for the attributes that, in turn, would lead go against the longevity of positive human life on earth – within all of its developments and needed systems of today and tomorrow.

By practice, humans have continued to teach humans, meet human demands, and develop humans in a world that may not only surpass our limitations but adapt to the human of tomorrow without losing the positive attributes of education that have led to success. Focusing less on the failed strategies that lead to high dropout rates, high failure rates, low proficiency scores, and high attrition rates within educational buildings. Focusing more on attributes that lead to more achievements and strides that shorten learning gaps and develop new learning strategies, adaptable, flexible, and open to the progression of intelligence in a healthy manner that keep humanity at the heart of the mission. Moreover, all contributing themes were once again covered in Chapter Five, where the themes of empathy, humanity and community, sentient existence, actions, worthlessness, change, performance, technology, and togetherness were discussed and aligned once again with the two research questions.

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Appendix A**Interview Guide**

Interview Questions	Research Question
8. Give examples of qualities you wish to see in educational leaders.	1
9. Describe what humanism means to you.	1
10. Give examples of what existential means to you.	1
11. How can education leaders create a high level of impact?	1
12. What has led to teacher attrition?	1
13. What keeps you in education?	2
14. What qualities do you currently see in educational leaders?	2
15. What are the current problems you see in education?	2
16. What problems do you foresee in the future of education?	2
17. How can educational leaders solve the current and future problems in education?	1&2

Appendix B**Interview Protocol**

12/7/2022

Study Title: Humanistic Universal Existential Leadership (HUEL)

You are invited to participate in my dissertation research study entitled “Humanistic Universal Existential Leadership” The study has been approved by the University of the Cumberland Institutional Review Board.

The purpose of this study is to identify current and future needed and wanted qualities of leaders. Potential participants will be contacted via email in private to begin research.

Data collection will involve at least one interview (maybe via phone/zoom/in-person), at most two interviews, which will take approximately at least 15 minutes with a maximum time limit of 45 minutes.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please email evitulli18433@ucumberlands.edu

Thank you for your interest in this study.

Sincerely,

E.G. Vitulli
University of the Cumberland
evitulli18433@ucumberlands.edu
7706537661

Dr. Brian Stark Department Chair
University of the Cumberland and Department
Brian.Stark@ucumberlands.edu

Appendix C

Tables

Table B1

Frequency Quality Tracker

Participant	EMP	SYM	NUR	CAR	KD	SER	ADP	TRS	LIST	CONS
1	*		*		*		*			*
2	*	*		*		*	*			
3	*				*			*	*	*
4		*	*	*		*		*		
5		*		*		*			*	*
6	*		*			*		*		*
7		*	*	*	*		*			
8			*		*		*		*	*
9	*	*	*			*	*			
10	*			*	*	*		*		
11		*	*		*		*		*	
12	*			*	*	*				*
13		*	*			*		*		*
14	*			*	*	*			*	
15		*			*	*	*	*		

Appendix D

Consent Forms



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled Humanistic Universal Existential Leadership (HUEL). You were selected as a potential participant due to your experience in Education. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before acting on this invitation to participate in the study.

This study is being conducted by Emilio Giovanni Vitulli, a doctoral candidate at the University of the Cumberlands, and has been approved by the UC Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to identify current and future wanted and needed qualities of leaders. The study will involve approximately 15 participants.

Inclusion Criteria:

You can participate in this study if you:

- Are you currently or have ever been a stakeholder within an educational building, institution, and/or organization?

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in at least one and at most two (15 to 45-minute) interviews, in person, or via phone/digital meeting template(s).

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Orange County Public Schools and/or The Department of Education in Florida. If you initially decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time later without affecting those relationships.

Risks and Benefits of Participation:

There is *no more than minimal risk* associated with participating in this study and there is no individual benefit to participation in the study. However, study findings may provide the overall benefit of developing better leaders and increasing educator retention within school districts.

In the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation in the study, you may terminate the interview and your participation at any time. At this point, none of the data collected related to the study will ever be shared. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful. Aside from the interview discussion, there will be no other procedures to be conducted within the research study.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study.

Recording: I understand my participation involves written recording and may include a virtual interview in which neither audio nor video will ever be shared nor recorded. If you decline the in-written recording of information that is only pertinent to the specific research questions, you will/will not be permitted to participate in the study.

Confidentiality:

Any data or records gathered from your participation will be kept private. Any identifiable data gathered will be coded to protect your identity. None of your personal information, and/or individual answers will be shared with any attachment to your name, title, location, demographic, and/or position at your school or organization – at any time before, during, or after the research is conducted. In any report of this study that might be published, The study will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be securely stored and only accessible to The study.

Contacts and Questions:

The study conducting this qualitative study is Emilio Giovanni Vitulli. The study's faculty advisor is Dr. Brian Stark. You may ask any questions you have related to the consent to participation. If you have questions later, you may contact them via evitulli18433@ucumberlands.edu or the UC Institutional Review Board (IRB) office at irb@ucumberland.edu.

Documentation of Consent *[Not for electronic informed consent]*

I have read the above information, have been given adequate time to consider the information, and understand I may stop participation at any point. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to take part in this study. You will be offered a copy of this signed form from the principal investigator.

Typed Name of

[Date]

Participant

Participant Signature

[Date]

Signature of

[Date]

Investigator

Consent

I have read the above information, been given adequate time to consider the information, and understand my participation is voluntary so I may stop participation at any point. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to take part in this study and understand I will be offered a copy of the completed form.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Appendix E

Interview Screening Survey

1. How many years in education?
2. Please state your title and responsibilities.
3. How many years have you or did you serve in the classroom?
4. The number of principals worked for?
5. The number of schools worked at?
6. Education as a college major?
7. Teaching as a college major?
8. Coming from the business sector?
9. First-year teacher?
10. First-year in education?
11. Retired teacher?
12. Retired from education?
13. Likely to leave education?
14. Likely to retire from education?

Appendix F

IRB Approval Letter

Principal Investigator: Emilio Vitulli
From: Institutional Review Board
Subject: IRB Approved (1432-1122)
Study title: Humanistic Universal Existential Leadership
Approval Date: 11/30/2022

Thank you for submitting your materials to the IRB office. The above-referenced human-subjects

research Study has been approved by the University of the Cumberland's Institutional Review Board. This approval is limited to the approved protocols described in the application which have been reviewed as acceptable activities described by the Office of Human Research Protections (HHS.org).

It has been determined that your study meets federal criteria to qualify as an expedited study in accordance with the requirements set forth in 45 CFR 46.110 finding that 1) the research is minimal risk, 2) that if identification of the participants and/or their responses reasonably place them at risk of criminal or civil liability or could be damaging to the participants' financial standing, employability, insurability, or reputation, or be stigmatizing there are reasonable and appropriate protections that will be implemented so that risk related to invasion of privacy and breach of confidentiality are no greater than minimal, and 3) that the research is not classified or does not involve prisoners, with the exception that the expedited review of minor amendments for approved studies involving prisoners may be used.

However, if there are changes to research Study in the following areas a modification form must be submitted to the IRB office:

- Substantial change to recruitment materials or consent documents
- Change in the data collection process
- Change in the location of the study
- Change in key personnel
- Change in instrumentation

Principal investigators are responsible for ensuring that studies are conducted according to University protocol. As a principal investigator, you have multiple responsibilities to the IRB, the research subjects and the faculty partner. If you have questions, please feel free to email me at IRB@ucumberlands.edu

Please continue to work with your dissertation advisor as you proceed.

Michalina Hendon, PhD

IRB Chair
Graduate School, Director of Research and Ethics University of the Cumberland's