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## **A study of in-service professional development training of principals for early childhood education in Illinois**

Kaneez Fatima

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## ABSTRACT

### A STUDY OF IN-SERVICE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRINCIPALS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Educational administrators are thought to affect the quality of curricular programs they direct. Inadequate academic qualifications, lack of professional expertise, and paucity of in-service professional development programs are some major factors that impact adversely the principals' performance of targeted responsibilities. This study aims to explore principals' professional expertise for improving the quality of early childhood education classroom practices in Illinois. Qualitative collective case-study methods were used; four early childhood principals were selected through a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through semi-structured interview protocols. Findings of the study indicate that in-service professional development training opportunities for preschool and early childhood education principals vary from district to district and are mostly related to school administration and supervision. All the principals believed in collaboration among administration and staff, an important strategy for professional development of their teachers. The data also revealed that time, retention and hiring of teachers, and financial resources are some challenges principals face when implementing knowledge gained from professional development trainings. Communication, technology, teacher evaluation and scoring, planning and preparation, and establishing a multi-tiered support system for the children were highlighted as principals' future professional development needs.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
DE KALB, ILLINOIS

MAY 2017

A STUDY OF IN-SERVICE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING OF  
PRINCIPALS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN ILLINOIS

BY

KANEEZ FATIMA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
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FOR THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL AND EARLY EDUCATION

Thesis Director:  
Dr. Myoungwhon Jung

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I am of the view that if someone wants to develop the long-run perspective on an issue, the only way to do so is through research. However, research is a tedious process that requires courage, patience, and perseverance. I am very thankful to the process of research, through which I developed these strong attributes.

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I offer my gratitude to the respected Dr. Robin Miller Young, who helped me locate the right participants for the study. Her support and follow-up regarding availability and response of the participants enabled me to complete my research efficiently.

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I am also thankful to my husband, who, through his continuous support and encouragement, sacrificed willingly his time to comfort me in my moments of need. He always made me know that he was with me in times of stress and comfort. He also provided me his valuable feedback whenever I discussed early childhood education related topics for my thesis writing.

Last but not the least, I am very grateful to my “Mother” who throughout the process contributed by encouraging me and bestowing me with meaningful prayers. I wish all the best to all the persons who made a difference in the whole process of the thesis writing.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate my first writing to my husband, Shamsuddin

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In the middle of April 2014, I saw my three-year-old niece writing in her notebook. When I closely observed her, she was tracing over the alphabet letter “F.” I was shocked to see her being able to write because it had been only one month since she began to attend an early childhood education (ECE) center. Researchers have suggested that formal writing instruction must be presented to young children after they develop the strong fine and gross motor skills needed for handwriting (Cherry, 2016; Thomas & Thomas, 2008).

I asked my older sister about the ECE center in her school, as she was the principal of the high school. She replied, “I don’t know much about their classes. I have assigned two teachers who are well trained in early childhood education to be in charge.” I followed with a series of questions, including how often she had visited the center, how teachers were guided in their knowledge and skills application, what types of activities they used to keep their students engaged in class, and how they assessed students. Again, she gave me the same answer, “I don’t know.”

At that point, eager for answers to my questions, I started to question principals of public schools of my district in Pakistan. I decided to contact several principals, using various sources and channels. Unfortunately, their responses were similar to what I had heard from my sister. Most of the principals did not have a solid educational background from formal training, neither did they have any other opportunities to build their capacities professionally in the field when they had been hired to lead EC programs.

Researchers have suggested that one of the most significant roles of a principal is to provide the best services to the community, district, and the state that support a quality education

(Aubrey, Godfrey, & Harris, 2012). Thus, principals should be qualified to provide leadership for curriculum and instruction decisions, as well as perform administrative responsibilities.

Without sound knowledge of EC curricula, best practices, and educational policies, principals cannot successfully monitor the performance of teachers working under their supervision. This is the reason for my enthusiasm in exploring in-service professional development of principals who supervise EC programs in the United States. An ECE degree or experiences with young children are not required for elementary school principals in the United States or Pakistan. Findings from this study can create awareness of the need for and significance of the professional development of principals who supervise EC classroom teachers.

#### Problem Statement

The quality of instruction and curriculum implementation has a direct link with effective school leadership and administration. People with administrative and supervisory positions have great impact on the quality of teaching and the learning processes taking place within their premises. Educational background and professional experiences acquired through professional development are major predictors of principals' performance (Caruso, 1991). Unfortunately, most states in the United States do not require ECE content for either principal preparation or professional development for principals (Brown, Squires, Connors-Tadros, & Horowitz, 2014). The lack of in-service EC professional development for principals assigned to lead preschools and EC programs may contribute to inappropriate or ineffective implementation of classroom practices and poor supervision.

#### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the inservice professional development experiences of early childhood (EC) principals from four school districts in Illinois. For this reason, the current study aims to investigate the needs of professional development for

principals, the types of professional development opportunities available to them, and how they implement ideas they learned during their training.

### Research Questions

The study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What in-service opportunities for EC professional development are available for preschool and EC principals?
2. How do EC professional development opportunities help principals supervise EC programs, including curriculum implementation?
3. How do EC professional development opportunities help principals support EC staff in their schools?
4. What are principals' current professional development needs in terms of supporting their EC staff and improving the quality of EC programs?

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Need for Professional Development for Principals

Fullan (as cited in DiPaola & Hoy, 2008) defined professional development broadly as “the sum of formal and informal learning experiences throughout one’s career from pre-service teacher education to retirement” (p. 128). This definition provides insight into the mechanism of professional development and suggests modes of learning experiences. Career-related training ensures a rudimentary consideration of the mechanism and structure of a profession, and this process boosts specialized professional knowledge and skills (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). Leaders in the Association for Supervision Curriculum Development (ASCD) described professional development as teacher-focused activities to help students achieve learning outcomes (Dipaola & Hoy, 2008).

From 1957 to 2014, the United States Congress passed more than 12 professional development acts. For instance, *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner et al., 1983) emphasized the importance of professional development of principals by highlighting that “principals and superintendents must play a crucial leadership role in developing school and community support for the reforms we propose, and school boards must provide them with the professional development and other support required to carry out their leadership role effectively” (p. 40). In 2001, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) also described professional development as a key strategy for improving the quality of education. NCLB required school leaders to provide professional development for teachers to improve their content knowledge, classroom management, and other skills needed to help their students reach more challenging standards (Dipaola & Hoy, 2008). Few researchers would argue why professional development for school

principals and teachers is important; however, they may ask whether principals receive sufficient support and training to perform their leadership roles, including assessing the professional needs of teachers.

Over the past two decades, the responsibilities of school principals and expectations for their position have changed for various reasons, including educational reforms and new regulations and policies. Under the NCLB, for example, principals must demonstrate instructional leadership skills in addition to their traditional managerial role as school administrators (Dipaola & Hoy, 2008). A former National Education Association (NEA) president, Van Roekel (2008, cited in Dipaola & Hoy, 2008), noted, “The requirements of NCLB have not only put the spotlight on principals’ instructional leadership skills but also make the point evident: academic achievement and instructional leadership are clearly and definitely linked” (p. 2). One of the critical issues for these changing expectations and roles of school principals is whether they receive sufficient training and support to perform their job.

Various world leaders have taken the initiative and proposed legislation to prepare these institutional supervisors. For instance, in the United States, a standards-based approach was adopted by members of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in 1994 (Duncan, Range, & Scherz, 2011). This encouraged many university professionals in the United States to review and systematize their school leadership curriculum around the ISLLC standards (Duncan et al., 2011). In 2002, the ISLLC and the National Council of Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE) program standards were included by the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) for school administrators. College and university leaders seek guidance from these standards to design curricula for principal preparation. Similarly, other countries in the world have also initiated and developed standards to guide principals in improving the quality of ECE and to build their capacities in order to meet institutional requirements. For instance, in Australia, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the national Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) made it

compulsory for school leaders to streamline their professional needs and build their capacity in order to make institutional progress (Stamopoulos, 2012).

The aforementioned standards make it obvious that school principals must have the capacity to enhance the quality of instruction. However, they may not be successful without sufficient training. Principals with insufficient job-related training may lack the abilities to supervise and support teachers and their instructional activities, including curriculum and classroom practices. Henry and Barnett (2004) emphasize the importance of providing adequate professional development for principals. In their study, they offered a two-week training course designed to help school principals become more knowledgeable about key principles of ECE. By analyzing survey data before and after the training, they found that the training had a positive impact on the participating principals' knowledge, including their awareness of best practices, developmentally appropriate practices, and parent involvement. Based on these research studies, acts, and legislations, it has become required for leaders in principal preparation organizations to consider holistic development of principals an important component when developing and designing professional development programs. In this way, not only is principals' professional expertise likely to grow, but the principals are also provided with an opportunity to keep abreast of the knowledge of their field.

#### In-Service Professional Development Programs Available for Principals

Leaders in the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Education (NAECTE), in collaboration with those in the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Department of Education (NAECS/SDE), proposed recommendations to prepare school district administration professionals in such a way that they could support EC teaching staff and programs (Henry & Barnett, 2004). Leaders in various professional associations currently offer professional development programs to principals to help them build their knowledge, skills, and

practice for ECE. These associations include the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), Illinois Principal Association (IPA), Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Leaders from these associations, e.g., IPA, offer a variety of professional support programs to current and new principals in 22 regions in Illinois. The focus of these programs is on principals' capacity to build and foster opportunities for networking, collaboration, making online learning communities, and mentoring services for new principals. The NAESP, on the other hand, not only offers school improvement professional support but attunes elementary school principals' competence to standards and assessments. Like IPA, NAESP also provides professional development for principals to foster their own practices and become mentors for new principals. The DEC organizes professional development for principals through conferences and institutions. These conferences and institutions are aimed at strengthening principals' competence to address administrative and supervisory issues. DEC offers professional development support in 24 states including Illinois. The NAEYC provides a platform for EC principals, administrators, and teachers to improve their organizational, professional, and personal skills through face-to-face training on developmentally appropriate practices, technology-based learning, blended learning, and human resource management in EC programs. NAEYC also provides EC principals and administrators with opportunities to nurture their critical-inquiry skills, construct knowledge, share their experiences, and assess their professional roles through attending the professional development sessions and conferences.

In Pakistan, leaders responsible for pre- and in-service professional development of teachers, educational leaders, and educational officers operate at provincial and regional levels. At provincial levels, the institutes include Provincial Institutes for Teacher Education (PITE), the Bureau of Curriculum and Extension Center (BOC&EC), colleges of education, and public and private universities that offer degree courses for principals and program administrators. In



Baluchistan, personnel at the BOC&EC are responsible for providing pre-service professional training to newly inducted teachers, whereas the PITE is mandated to arrange in-service professional development activities for teachers, principals, and educational officers in areas recommended by the Ministry of Education and district education offices. Being a faculty member of PITE, I am unable to provide an example of an EC professional development activity for principals or head teachers in my province. Many constitutional reforms have been introduced in the domain of education in Baluchistan over the last few years. One of these reforms is to institutionalize ECE to improve the quality of education (Government of Baluchistan, Education Department, Policy and Planning Implementation Unit, 2013). In this scenario, there is a great need for expertise in the field of ECE.

EC organizations and associations offer professional development opportunities to support EC teaching and administration staff in improving their practices. These professional organizations often coordinate their professional development offerings with the needs identified by state and district officials. To make professional development need-based, succinct, effective, and relevant, it is necessary to develop a strong coordination between the state/district and these district-, state-, and national-level organizations so that a more targeted and result-oriented professional development program can be designed and offered to EC principals.

#### Issues in Professional Development for Educational Administrators

In the United States, principals are initially prepared for their professional roles through completing university administration programs, which aim to equip them with skills to apply theory to real-life situations. They continue their professional growth through in-service professional development programs available at district, state, and national levels. Many researchers have noted that graduates of principal preparation programs are underprepared and the content of the programs is inadequate due to the insufficient application of theory to practice

(Duncan et al., 2013; Pounder & Crow, 2005). In the United States, researchers have raised several concerns over quality, equity, and sustainability issues regarding professional development programs. Despite using multiple pathways to improve professional skills of teachers and principals, the effectiveness of professional development programs remains questionable (Gomez, Kagan, & Fox, 2015).

The quality of professional development, its content, and the mechanisms of monitoring professional development programs are controversial. The main reason for this controversy is the one-size-fits-all thinking of district, state, and national officials. Research also spotlights the scarcity of research on the individual professional needs of the principals. Districts' approaches toward providing professional development to principals is unproductive (Duncan et al., 2011). Further, principals are required to prepare themselves to provide education leadership and quality education services to all children; therefore, it is imperative that professional development for principals address each individual principal's professional requirements (Cooner, Tochtermann, & Garrison-Wade, 2004).

### Characteristics of Effective EC Principals

Many researchers have focused on the role of teachers in improving the quality of education and guaranteeing higher quality at programmatic and systems levels. Principals or directors in ECE, especially, require an introspective and skillful leadership style (Ryan, Whitebook, Kipnis, & Sakai, 2011). One of the key job descriptions of an EC principal is to deliver outstanding service (Aubrey et al., 2012). Other researchers have suggested that preschool directors, principals, or supervisors must enhance and ensure quality in their own work but also collaborate with other leaders (Ryan et al., 2011). Recent reforms in education have strengthened the role of EC professionals to improve student learning outcomes (Stamopoulos, 2012). An effective principal always envisions his/her teachers' professional development as an assurance of improved student learning outcomes.

Stamopoulos (2012) identifies four characteristics of EC leadership that principals must know, recognize, and implement in their workplace: “professional knowledge, professional identity, the application of interpretive lenses, and relational trust” (p. 45). These four attributes are correlated and build capacity in leaders. By using these attributes, principals can create an environment that stimulates a spirit of reinforcement and encouragement in their teachers for the delivery of quality services. Colmar (2008, cited in Stamopoulos, 2008) notes, “Leaders who nurture reflective capacity in staff have been effective in constructing a shared culture of learning that meets the needs of organizations” (Stamopoulos, 2008, p. 46). Other researchers have come to similar conclusions. According to Aubrey et al. (2012) and Pashiardis (1998), effective principals are constant learners who demonstrate great passion for their profession, have persuasive skills to influence others from their position, are risk-takers, are strong-willed, find innovative ways to reward and motivate their teachers and students, and have a strong drive for constant improvement and advancement. To be effective, it is imperative for school principals to have the understanding and skills to mobilize their communities to resolve unaddressed issues (Cooner et al., 2004).

The quality of EC leadership has remained the main topic of many research studies throughout the world (Brown et al., 2014; Caruso, 1991; Dipaola & Hoy, 2008; Stamopoulos, 2012). The findings of these research studies may not be fully generalizable to any other country due to the contextual and demographic disparities. However, an overall understanding of EC programs can be gained in various parts of the globe.

Many researchers have studied the professional development of teachers and its impact on student learning, but few have investigated the professional development experiences of principals in EC programs throughout the world (Sheridan, Pope-Edwards, Marvin, & Knoche, 2009). Student achievement is influenced by early learning experiences, and school administrators play an important role in shaping these experiences (Bush, 2012). Moreover, available research does not provide sufficient information about the ways in which

administrators are trained and what type of professional development is offered to them. Analyzing the matter of leadership in ECE, Bush (2012) reviews various research studies conducted in various countries, including the United States, England, Pakistan, Jordan, and Scotland. One common finding from those studies is that leadership in ECE has been greatly underrepresented in academic research. The reviewed literature also indicates minimal research on the ways in which principal training or professional development in ECE impacts student learning outcomes and the ways in which these trained principals design professional development activities for their teachers. This study aims to explore questions related to the professional development of EC leaders that have been neglected in the previous studies. This study provides new information about the available in-service EC professional development programs for preschool and EC principals and the benefits these principals receive from in-service training programs and support that they can provide to their EC staff. This study also contributes to the knowledge base regarding EC leaders' professional development and its impact on organizational objectives.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Study Design

The purpose of this study is to examine the in-service EC professional development experiences of principals in elementary schools in the United States. Because the nature of the study was exploratory, a qualitative research method was used to investigate the phenomenon. A collective case-study method was chosen as the research design. Collective case studies focus on similarities in several cases, which may result in similar conclusions being drawn (Baxter & Jack, 2008). According to Yin (2003), case studies are appropriate strategies when researchers investigate a contemporary phenomenon to gain a deeper understanding within a bounded context, that is, when the boundaries between context and phenomenon are not clear.

In addition, the case-study method is used when a researcher wants to answer “how” and “why” questions and when a researcher cannot manipulate the behaviors of those being studied (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This study aims to examine the “how” and “why” aspects of in-service professional development experiences of principals within the domain of EC programs. Therefore, a collective case-study method is the most appropriate research methodology with which to explore the phenomenon of professional development experiences available to elementary school principals supervising EC programs.

#### Sampling

The research sites for this study were EC centers/EC learning centers (or learning centers for young children) located in four districts of Illinois. Each district had its own EC center, and all had mixed education settings (regular and blended classrooms). The demographic data cited

following were shared by the participants during their interviews, and I was also able to see their schools' report cards. The demographics of these EC learning centers are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

## Site Data

Demographic	EC Center #1	EC Center #2	EC Center #3	EC Center #4
Location	Suburban	Urban	Rural	Suburban
District size	28,785 students	29,046 students	18,089 students	8,910 students
Enrollment	359 students	438 students	499 students	350-400 students
Class size	18	20	20-25	21-23
Age group	3-4-year-old	3-4-year-old	3-5-year-old	3-5-year-old
Ethnic groups served	Black, Hispanic, White, and multi-racial	White, Hispanic, Black, Asian, and multi-racial	White, Hispanic, Black, and Asian	White, Hispanic, Black, and multi-racial
Teaching staff with master's degrees in EC/special education	70%	66%	75%	86%

## Participants

As per the requirement of the study, there was a need to select research participants having relevant experiences in the ECE field. This approach allowed me to use a purposeful sampling method for selecting research participants and enabled me to obtain deeper insights into the research problem. Moreover, researchers use purposeful sampling frequently to select individuals and sites to understand and learn central phenomena (Creswell, 2015).

Four EC principals---Brittaney, Suzan, Jacky, and Laura (pseudonyms)---participated in the study. Among these, Brittaney had retired recently (in 2014), and the remaining three were current principals of EC learning centers. Information describing the research participants is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2  
Participant Demographic Data

Demographic	Brittaney	Suzan	Jacky	Laura
Occupation	Mentor, retired	Principal	Principal	Principal
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female
Age	62+	45+	28+	55+
Race/ ethnicity	White	White	White	White
Education	Master's degree in Special Education (emphasis: ECE)	Master's degree in Educational Leadership	Master's degree in Educational Leadership; Bachelor degree in ECE	Master's degree in Learning Disabilities and Educational Leadership; Bachelor degree in ECE
Experience	Principal; assistant director of special education; assistant principal; elementary school teacher	Director of ECE; assistant principal; preschool teacher	Assistant principal; preschool teacher	Preschool teacher
Number of years of experience	20+	14+	10+	25+

### Measures

For this study, a semi-structured interview was used as a method for data collection. This method helps a researcher uncover important and unseen aspects of human and organizational behaviors, such as thoughts, emotions, and experiences (Sandy & Dumay, 2011). It is the way through which a researcher attempts to comprehend the participants' world and their words and phrases (Yin, 2011).

This study's semi-structured interviews for the principals included open-ended questions regarding (a) the type of EC in-service professional trainings and general administration trainings they had attended, (b) the usefulness of the trainings (ECE and general administration) in their professional life, (c) the ways in which they have integrated their training in their schools, and (d) their current professional needs in terms of supporting EC teaching staff.

### Data Collection

Each participant was interviewed individually once for 40-50 minutes. The dates and time for each interview were scheduled via emails, and convenient times and locations were determined. Due to scheduling conflicts, two participants were interviewed via telephone. The other two principals were interviewed in their offices. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

### Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis procedures were ongoing. As I interviewed the participants, I took notes in a reflective diary. However, proper data analysis was done through coding and selecting micro and macro themes. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) state that qualitative data analysis involves “organizing, accounting for, and explaining the data . . . [and] making sense of the data in terms of participants’ definitions” (p. 537). For this study, a thematic form of data analysis was used, in which themes and patterns were identified (Glesne, 2011). Thus, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The data were coded and categorized under various themes. The codification process enabled me to identify relevant data and analyze them for the emerging framework for interpretation.

### Researcher’s Role and Potential Ethical Issues

Throughout the process, I, as researcher, attempted to remain objective. To support this intention, I sent the interview transcription to the research participants for verification of the content to ensure that I had interpreted the content accurately. However, in qualitative research, it is impossible for a researcher to remain completely objective because he/she interprets the interviewees’ responses through his/her own lens. Also, the content of the interview may be interpreted in a sense that may or may not have been meant by the interviewee.



I followed procedural steps for conducting research of this kind. First, an approval was received from the Institutional Review Board. Second, the research participants were notified in advance by email and phone calls. When the principals had indicated their willingness to participate, they were sent an email containing research information about the study and a formal invitation letter (see Appendix A). They were informed that they needed to sign a formal consent before participating. The confidentiality of participants' names were maintained with the use of pseudonyms; research records were discarded after the completion of this research.

### Credibility of Current Research

Trustworthiness is an important aspect of qualitative research. Qualitative research studies are usually validated through various techniques, such as triangulation, member checking, and external auditing (Creswell, 2015). In the present study, due to its single-source data-collection method, I used member checking and external auditing to enhance the credibility of current research.

Member checking is “taking data and tentative interpretation back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible” (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). I used this technique to confirm that my interpretations of transcribed data were accurate. Interview transcripts were sent to the participants. Three of the participants sent their written feedback via email, and one participant discussed feedback via telephone. Two of the four participants confirmed the interpretation, and the remaining two suggested rewording for some of their statements.

In addition, I used external auditing to improve the credibility of current research. I reviewed the themes and codes of the transcribed data through sessions with writing coaches in the university writing center and also obtained services of a professional auditor to review the various chapters of the study.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

Based on the purpose of the study, four research questions were developed:

1. What in-service opportunities for EC professional development are available for preschool and EC principals?
2. How do EC professional development opportunities help principals supervise EC programs, including curriculum implementation?
3. How do EC professional development opportunities help principals support EC staff in their schools?
4. What are principals' current professional development needs in terms of supporting their EC staff and improving the quality of EC programs?

This chapter includes descriptions of the study's purpose, research questions, instrument, participants, and sites. Further, the chapter presents various aspects of the analyzed data under the specific themes. The major themes of this study are:

1. Professional development opportunities available to preschool and EC principals,
2. Principals' perceptions of professional development for supervision of EC program in schools,
3. Principals' perceptions of professional support and needs assessment of their EC staff,
4. Challenges faced by principals in implementing professional development skills, and
5. Principals' future professional development needs.

These major themes and sub-themes are described in Table 3.

Table 3

## Themes, Subthemes, and Codes for the Current Study

Codes	Sub-Themes	Themes
<p>In-service PD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership needs for PD</li> <li>• PD trainings as job requirement</li> </ul> <p>Helpful PD as mentors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limitations of mentors in guiding the principals</li> <li>• Mentoring helpful to principals' PD</li> <li>• Practical application of the training</li> </ul> <p>Leadership trainings received as EC leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of trainings in which principals participated</li> <li>• Leadership strengths in EC trainings for teachers</li> <li>• Principals' agency important to implement PD</li> <li>• EC mental health-related training</li> <li>• EC training</li> <li>• Private organizations as PD source</li> </ul> <p>Self-awareness through experience</p> <p>Difference between recent and old training program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern rigorous training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PD on district and state level</li> <li>• Variation in principals' PD experiences</li> <li>• Mentoring training services by private organization</li> <li>• PD more focused on general administration</li> <li>• PD pursued on own</li> <li>• Human resource management</li> <li>• Special education PD content</li> <li>• PD as job requirement</li> <li>• Requirement of 80 hours PD for five years</li> </ul>	<p>PD opportunities available to preschool and EC principals</p>
<p>Principal's responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher training</li> </ul> <p>Principal's approach toward implementation of PD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis of system building rather than PLCs</li> <li>• Practical know-how of PD in EC for teachers</li> <li>• Database for PD trainings of teachers</li> <li>• Support through EC teacher training</li> </ul> <p>Implemented teacher training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confused statements</li> </ul> <p>Teacher skills development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructional improvement</li> <li>• Support for teachers in evaluation</li> <li>• Role model for teachers</li> <li>• Team development</li> <li>• Selection of developmentally appropriate practices</li> </ul> <p>Communication improvement</p> <p>Curriculum PD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervision and administrative responsibility</li> <li>• Strategies to communicate, collaborate, evaluate and support teachers</li> <li>• Application of the learning through PD</li> <li>• Developing professional relationships</li> <li>• Helping teachers retain information and take part in the planning</li> <li>• Teachers' PD in classroom practices especially in assessment</li> <li>• Helpfulness of PD for students' need assessment/ identification</li> <li>• PD, a mechanism to successful curriculum implementation</li> <li>• Collaboration and teamwork</li> </ul>	<p>Principals' perception of PD for supervision of early childhood programs</p>

(continued on following page)

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Codes	Sub-Themes	Themes
<p>General administration focused Staff need identification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement in school development plans</li> <li>• Institute days</li> <li>• Encouraging the staff to learn from each other</li> <li>• Morning meetings</li> </ul> <p>Seeking expertise from outside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inviting guest speakers</li> <li>• Expert consultancy</li> </ul> <p>PD staff's own responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reimbursing the training expenses</li> <li>• Cooperation with staff for PD opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of PD for staff capacity building</li> <li>• Overload of administrative tasks</li> <li>• More focused on solving administrative issues rather than staff development</li> <li>• Importance of staff collaboration for learning from each other</li> <li>• Delegation of responsibilities to staff</li> <li>• Strategies for teachers' need assessment</li> <li>• Supporting teachers</li> <li>• Individual differences, specific needs</li> </ul>	<p>Principals' perception regarding supporting and need assessment of EC staff</p>
<p>Challenges implementing PD skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Load of administrative responsibilities</li> <li>• New staff</li> <li>• Lack of background knowledge of EC practices</li> <li>• EC models,</li> </ul> <p>Financing issue Practical application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hands-on</li> </ul> <p>Excessive administrative tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of resources</li> <li>• Staff turnover</li> <li>• Classroom management</li> <li>• School administration, time consuming</li> <li>• Background knowledge of the school administrators</li> <li>• Lack of research-based early childhood interventions and models</li> <li>• Lack of financial resources</li> </ul>	<p>Challenges faced in implementation of PD knowledge and skills</p>
<p>Good leadership practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowering teachers</li> <li>• Planning activities</li> <li>• Time management</li> </ul> <p>Administrative items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal pieces</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Finding resources</li> </ul> <p>Setting up system Developmentally appropriate practices, special education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children with disability</li> <li>• Socio-emotional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher evaluation processes</li> <li>• Helping teachers to reflect and assess their own instruction</li> <li>• A multi-tiered system of support for children</li> <li>• Use of technology</li> <li>• Planning and preparation</li> <li>• EC supervision and administrative tasks</li> </ul>	<p>Future professional development needs of the principals</p>

### Professional Development Opportunities Available to Preschool and EC Principals

The data analysis highlighted various aspects of the principals' perceptions about their own professional development and that of their teaching staff. These perceptions shed light on the professional development opportunities available to principals and their staff. Principals have several types of professional development opportunities in their career, including those offered by their districts, regional levels of government (e.g., regional offices of education), and the state. In Illinois, officials from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) offer professional development. In addition to these, privately run organizations and associations provide opportunities for training and mentoring services. In terms of the district's professional development opportunities, Brittaney stated,

Yes, as an early childhood principal, I participated in an extensive number of professional development in the area of early childhood. Overall, there were a range of topics during a period of over 20 years..

She further explained the topics of professional development she received:

I had, granted, the in-service experiences [that] have been wide ranged, anywhere focusing from leadership, looking at curriculum, looking at working with students with special needs, along with the students who do not, who are English language learners, at the students who are at risk, of our training under special education and special education state and federal rules and regulations, so those kinds of things, and then training in leadership.

However, she did not specify the frequency of these professional development training sessions.

In this regard, Suzan had just resumed her job as an EC principal. When she was asked to share her professional development experiences as an EC principal, she said,

I did since starting, I had a half-day training from our director, just looking at our assessments in the environmental rating scale. . . . I have a full-day training set up in two days on Wednesday from our mental health providers, the child mental health provider, again just a full-day training on mental health needs in early childhood. I would say, compared to most districts, we have a lot of professional development that looks specifically at our children and our program.

Jacky had a different view about these kinds of opportunities and their availability for principals. He contended that he had pursued such trainings on his own. Because he already had

his undergraduate degree in ECE, he maintained that the trainings were not helpful toward his professional development, and he termed trainings as “general administrative professional development.” He went on to say, “I don't know if that’s necessarily something specific to early childhood education but just maybe to administration in general.” He supplemented his thoughts:

Right now I am part of a program called *Lead Learn Excel*: it focuses on administration of early childhood level and increasing instruction, or improving instruction, so that meets monthly. Then there are other webinars or web-based professional development that I do on my own time, and that would also probably be once every other month in addition to reading articles, books, or other pieces of professional development.

Similarly, Laura pointed out the nature of trainings: “All my training to be a principal was more about supervision of staff evaluation, all that human resource piece, ethics, you know, finance, all the kind of administrative pieces.”

Laura explained the professional development opportunities in a different dimension. She attended primarily professional development trainings organized on a state level. She mentioned Starnet, offered by the Illinois Resource Center, as the primary resource for her professional development in ECE. Starnet provided professional development assistance, workshops, on-site technical assistance, and resource materials for EC professionals working with children three to five years of age. During the interview, she stated that she had received many trainings through Starnet. She further discussed the trainings she had received on special education from Response to Intervention (RtI) innovations conferences, the CEC, the DEC, IPA, and the Midwest Principal Center.

The types of professional development opportunities available to these principals with respect to their focus on ECE differed greatly. Brittaney, a retired principal and currently a consultant, credited her professional development opportunities to the organization associated with her consultation: “Actually, I do consulting through an organization. That is where I have been able to get my professional development to further expand my skills through that group that I am working with now, to continue to help support principals with some of those skills.” Suzan

referred to the privately held trainings as “many different opportunities available through local chapters and through local organizations.” The topic of these trainings ranged from special education to autism awareness. Because principals must look at their schools with a holistic approach, from instructional improvement to administration, it is mandatory for them to have knowledge about the issues they face.

Laura highlighted a significant topic for professional development training opportunities for school administrators and teachers: “Autism is always a reality for families and in preschool education.” She emphasized the need for administrators’ engagement with private organizations to improve their skills with respect to ECE. She said she had attended training sessions conducted by the Illinois Alliance of Administrators for Special Education, the Lake County regional office of education and vision conference, the Illinois Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, John Hattie's visible learning, and the University of South Florida. The topics of these training sessions included organizational health and healthy teams, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBEL) skills training, RtI conferences, and trauma and resilience in preschool in the Program to Enhance the Student Experience (PESI). Suzan added various professional development activities to the list of opportunities available for principals in her district. Among them included assessments in the early childhood environmental rating scale (ECERS), mandated Preschool For All (PFA), and training sessions about child mental health. She believed her district made available more opportunities for EC professional development for principals than did other districts.

The principals tended to identify opportunities available to them through their respective districts. On the one hand, they highlighted the professional development opportunities available to them at a district level, but on the other hand, they did not specifically identify the types of opportunities. With the exception of one principal, all participants appreciated the opportunities they received; however, they were not sure about the purposes of these trainings for EC principals. The trainings were focused mostly on general administration and supervision

and were not related specifically to ECE content. Further, one principal highlighted more privately available opportunities than district-level organized trainings. This indicates a disparity among school districts that provide professional development opportunities to EC principals. Further, participants stated that they tended to take these training opportunities as a requirement for their job rather than for their own preference or personal growth as principals.

For example, Laura said, “We have to attend workshops and things like that, we have to take courses to keep our licenses and certificates.” She conceded that she had learned new skills from attending the workshops, but she tended to express her training as a job. She explained, “You have to do that to keep your license, but you know I do learn a lot from the conferences I go to, workshops I go to attend.” She further clarified that 80 hours of professional development training for five years were required by ISBE for principals to maintain their licenses and jobs.

#### Principals’ Perceptions of Professional Development for Supervision of EC Programs in Schools

Principals have a complex web of responsibilities to perform. They have to manage the whole school as well as supervise classroom instruction. Responsibilities related to classroom instruction become quite complicated, particularly in the case of elementary schools. The data analysis revealed interesting perceptions of principals about their role as instruction supervisors in EC classes. Principals tend to consider supervision to be their administrative responsibility. For instance, when I asked Brittany to share her experiences regarding the support she received from EC professional development trainings, her emphasis was on the strategies she learned from these EC professional development trainings. She further explained,

I think, from a leadership perspective, just strategies for communication, how to communicate, how to develop a team, how to help people develop working as a team, looking at communication, how to set up building systems and structures, how to set up expectations for teachers, setting up the models, how to do all of that---how to work with teachers in developing their own skills and evaluating that, teacher evaluation, processes, how to evaluate and support teachers in the classroom---is also a big part of the training, and developing teachers' own skills.



She continued by saying, “The training provided an opportunity to not only increase my own skills in an area of development, yet also provided networking opportunities to develop professional relationships and learn from other principals’ experiences.” She further explained,

I mentor three principals right now. So we have an opportunity to be connected to that world, a little bit; one is early childhood and the other two are elementary principals. They would tell you it is helping them keep focused on the big picture, what are the big fundamentals, what are the fundamental things we need to be doing, no matter where we are.

When Brittaney was asked to share the ways in which professional development had helped her supervise her EC program, she responded,

I believe that until you are in to the process and you are doing, there is always a rich part of professional development that comes with hands-on and learning the application when you’re there; it’s the application piece that is critical; how to apply it to real-life settings is the most important part of the professional development trainings. . . . Based on the new standards for principals, the real focus is on the big picture as it aligns to some of the good leadership practices, a big picture, what does leadership look like, in a building?

According to Brittaney, professional development helped her understand the alignment of leadership practices as per school needs. She utilized her skills learned from these professional development trainings as she mentors other principals. She also believes what makes her task as a mentor, was the application of skills and knowledge she learned during professional development trainings. She explained, “As I move forward in beginning to apply some of the things I have learned, the application makes it much easier. When you learn how to apply the theories and the models that you have been taught, it makes it much easier.” Similarly, Suzan explained her experiences of EC professional development trainings to supervise EC programs:

Yes, it will very much help. I used to train for five years, and I would say that is a strength of mine. I deeply enjoy it; trying to incorporate multiple modalities into training to help teachers retain the information that they are getting, because so often our teachers go and sit in the institute for eight hours. They’re just sitting there and getting information, and it rarely goes back to the classroom, so I try to make sure that it’s active and engaging---that they take part in the planning. And then, as we’re going through it, they are helping to deliver it, but they are also active participatory learners throughout it, something that then we survey afterwards---how did you think this went?---and then I monitor the implementation through an informal walk-through.

For Suzan, professional development was quite helpful in instructional improvement and

curriculum implementation. However, she left it to the principals to decide the ways in which they would use their professional development to supervise the instruction. She explained,

I think the characteristics of the principal themselves is really what determines that, more so than the professional development, as to whether or not they are going to make an attempt to go back to implement those things, the way they are going to communicate those things to staff, so that the staff buy in or see the importance of whatever the training was and how it gets monitored for implementation.

She also admitted that being a first-year principal in that school had limited her ability to implement the ideas she learned through professional development trainings.

Results of the study also indicated that the school principals perceived their professional development to be an integral part of the supervision of instruction in their schools as a need that led them to supervise instruction. Their perceptions highlighted their inclination to “systematize” the process of supervision of instruction for the professional development of their teachers. Furthermore, they also emphasized the need to collaborate among the administration and the staff for improved EC instruction and effective service delivery.

The data also revealed that principals’ approach toward using their professional development for supervision of EC programs depends on the time period of their principalship and the professional development opportunities they have availed thus far. For example, Jacky’s perception regarding supervision and implementation of curriculum at his school mirrored his exposure to the professional development opportunities he had so far. When asked if he had applied the learned ideas at his school, he replied,

As a boss, I can just tell them, no, we must do it this way, but a lot of that is teaching them why. Why these things are important for kids to be successful, just tracking progress, what they do with that information once you track that progress. A lot of this is based upon the needs of our students and what they are displaying that they need and that tell the form of professional development.

Moreover, Jacky perceived professional development for the supervision of EC programs as a guiding procedure that allows the staff to understand how to be on the right track in terms of selecting developmentally appropriate learning activities for all students. He said, “What are the most developmentally appropriate practices, some areas that we might need? We are really good

at ‘on the fly assessment’, trying to figure out what each child needs. Because we have such a large special education population that we are just attuned to individualizing education.”

Jacky believed that the teachers were not able to assess the students’ efficiency properly, which underlined the need for teachers’ professional development in classroom practices, especially how to assess the students’ learning. He continued, “Just showing our teachers how and why to assess is important.” He believed that professional development sessions and workshops organized both at the school and district levels helped teachers identify students’ learning needs, particularly children with disabilities and EC students. He went on to say, “A lot of this [professional development] is based upon the needs of our students and what they are displaying that they need.”

Laura had a different perception regarding the professional development training she received and its implementation for supervision purposes. She appreciated the professional development opportunities for her capacity building and also acknowledged that “sometimes it’s not anything that you can really bring back, depending on if you already know that there is always something that I bring back to staff or to my practice.” She considered supervision of the teaching-learning process at schools to be a highly important part of her job, and in supervision, collaborating with staff would be imperative. She termed “collaboration” as “an effective strategy” to carry on supervision tasks. She further elucidated, “When we wrote a curriculum, there were people that worked on literacy, people that worked on math. I oversaw the entire project, so it was more of a team effort.” The principals’ reflections on using their professional development to supervise EC programs at their schools showed their understanding of the staff and the learning environment in which they worked. Principals’ understanding regarding putting together all administrative pieces (staff, students, and physical resources) to take benefit from them also showed their expertise to supervise EC programs efficiently. However, they believed that the professional development was a mechanism that would lead them to supervise the EC program and curriculum implementation at their schools successfully.

### Principals' Perceptions Regarding Supporting and Needs Assessment of EC Staff

Principals are important to educational programs and influence the teaching and learning processes directly and indirectly by providing guidance and assistance to their teachers. A principal alone cannot bring any change without the help and collaboration of his/her staff. The EC professional development opportunities of principals helped them understand the system of developing empathy toward their staff for improved instruction and curriculum instruction. However, the participants also admitted that due to the overload of administrative tasks, they had become more focused on solving and addressing responsibilities related to school administration rather than staff development. One of the principals accepted his limitation of not being expert in everything. He said, "The principal doesn't have to be the expert in the room, but instead, teaching them [teachers] to tap into those resources that are there, so I think that's something really beneficial to administration just on all [planning, designing, and implementing] levels." Hence, he highlighted the need for teacher collaboration so that teachers could learn from each other as well as share the knowledge they acquired during their professional development sessions when participating in different trainings.

That principal emphasized the importance of "setting up the system of allowing professionals to grow as peers, so that they will be able to work together with a focus on their students' learning and growth." He considered it to be "something beneficial for all administrators . . . as well as going through a process for being intentional in all teachers to be intentional with their teaching and student learning."

Similarly, Laura pointed out that the culture of collaboration and delegation of responsibilities of various tasks to teams and groups would enable teachers to work together and learn from themselves as teams. She said, "I think that as a whole team, the staff and myself work together, to problem solve, we'll have a committee, we've developed subcommittees, have assigned different topics to distribute the work." Such collaborative work and a collegial culture

provide incentives to administrators to develop their skills of teacher evaluation by participating in professional development trainings.

The school principals were quite conscious of their role in identifying the professional development needs of their teachers, particularly regarding EC teachers who taught younger children. Their interview statements emphasized that the teachers needed their support. For instance, Brittaney saw it as her responsibility to look after the teachers' needs and work with them closely in the school. She said, "Certainly, you work closely with a building leadership team in your building [school]. So there were teachers that represented the building, so building leadership teamwork with the group [teachers] collaboratively helped them determine their [teachers'] needs." She described further, "To identify what kind of training needed to be in place for teachers, we did it with a team of teachers and staff." In the same tone, Suzan reiterated similar statements about the importance of identification of the teachers' needs for their professional development. For her, there were "two morning meetings a month, set aside for the staff development on top of the school improvement days and school institute days. Those are planned collaboratively with the teachers, so, through an assessment of needs from the staff." However, because her approach involved teachers in person, she believed she was unable to identify teachers' needs because they were not available before September. She said, "Our first one [meeting] will be in September, but the teaching staff won't be back to school yet. So I can't survey their needs, but that would be the plan---to survey their needs in next August."

Jacky approached teachers' professional development needs in a different way. He engaged his teachers in making their own professional development plans in which "they [teachers] identify different areas they might like to pursue." He used an evaluation tool for all teachers called "Charlotte Danielson's Model." He further explained the evaluation tool:

There are four domains that they are assessed upon, and so they can use their scores in those domains and their scores in those areas to pursue different professional development opportunities as well, so that they are able to bounce ideas off those who may have 30 years of experience or those are that are fresh out of college who have the latest and greatest research behind them. We have been trying to provide them more

opportunities of that collaborating as well as understanding that not everybody needs the exact same professional development, so providing different opportunities for them to select what will be the best for them as teachers.

In this way, he tried to use multi-faceted strategy to provide professional support to his staff, based on their need assessment. He elaborated his strategy further:

We are trying to do, this school year, a more of, like, job-embedded professional development. So less of them [teachers] are going out to see an expert, more along the lines of providing opportunities for them [teachers] to collaborate with the other peers that are in the building.

Jacky paired experienced teachers with novice teachers so that they could develop their own professional development plans. He tried to prove that “Not everybody needs the same professional development, so [we’ll be] providing different opportunities for them [teachers] to select what will be the best for them as teachers.” He further stated that he would need to determine the purpose and duration of the training, as well as “to identify where that professional development can take place, throughout the school year or over the summer, if needed, as well as finding those resources.”

Laura used various strategies for identifying the professional development needs of her teachers, including leaving it to the teachers themselves. Still, she encouraged them to take courses if they needed to, and she helped them earn available credits and reimbursed them for those courses to secure their licenses. Besides this, Laura used a “dialogue” strategy to identify professional development needs of her teachers. She discussed professional goals of her teachers with them individually. The teachers’ goals determined what type of professional development they needed in place. Laura elucidated further:

I talk to them about a goal, and if their goal is something they want to learn about, then I would encourage them to look for those opportunities, or if I see something come across my desk, I would put it in their mailbox or forward it to them, if it was email. So I try to have that dialogue with teachers in the beginning of the year, in the first month, and watch for things throughout the school year, or if they find something, I’ll encourage them to go.

Laura utilized the school budget to arrange visits of guest speakers who would come to school and talk to teachers about their professional development. She found it beneficial for the entire

school staff. She said, “[I] reimburse them, and it’s their responsibility [to learn and come back with skills]. So I encourage people [teachers] if they see something they’re interested in, to go for it, and bring that back.”

In addition to supporting the staff to improve instruction, principals also provided support to their teachers in curriculum implementation. Laura highlighted the fact that when she was unfamiliar with a new curriculum, she hired a consultant to train her teachers professionally to implement it into their classrooms. She said, “As we bought a new curriculum, I had a trainer come in for two full days to teach [and] train the teachers on the curriculum.” She believed that bringing a consultant within the school boundaries was itself a strategy that she had adopted for the professional development of her staff. She said, “It helps their confidence that someone really knows the material, is explaining it to them, and it just helps them once that trainer leaves to be confident in their practice.” In this way, Laura tries to encourage her staff recognizing to what extent could their abilities and skills be beneficial for their classroom practices.

Providing support was not limited to instructional improvement or training teachers in curriculum implementation. Principals also considered the need for developing a system of teacher evaluation. Similarly, the importance of assessing teachers’ instructional improvement, and especially their abilities to assess the students, was also documented by other principals as well. In this regard, Jacky pointed out the correlation between student learning outcomes and teacher professional development in using assessment tools. He stated, “We look at students’ results and their overall scores on the assessment tool we’ve been using, and we can see their growth. We are also able to see now how teachers are becoming more intentional.” Such a connection between curriculum and instruction, and instruction and assessment, provides teachers with skills that finally align required learning standards with assessment tools. Teachers’ professional development in this regard paves the way for improved instructional practices at all levels in the school. For Jacky, such professional development opportunities helped teachers

become more professional and utilize developmentally appropriate lesson planning to teach children rather than just to present the content.

The principals' approaches and strategies in supporting and identifying their teachers' professional development needs are different, but the main purpose is the same: to provide them with opportunities to grow professionally and improve teaching practices for young children. Their approaches in this regard reflect their responsiveness toward adopting and using some strategies to support and identify their teachers' needs and digging into the resources to make professional development happen. However, the data also reflect some sort of planning and initiating school-based and job-embedded professional development issues at school sides. Moreover, principals rely on bringing in external human resources to train their staff, which not only points to a lack of interest at the administration level, but also highlights the principals' own further professional development needs in those areas.

### Challenges Faced by Principals in Implementing Professional Development Skills

It is only one side of the situation to describe the ways in which the principals use their own ECE training. However, it is similarly important to investigate challenges principals face when implementing their professional development skills at their schools. These challenges vary from district to district and context to context in terms of hiring teachers and providing resources. For example, Suzan highlighted staff turnover as one of the biggest challenges she faced in implementing skills in her schools. She said,

The levels of experience and understanding of the teaching staff are very different levels. So one third of my staff will be brand new this year. So they won't have any background knowledge. I can see that as a concern, something they'll have to overcome. I will need to find time to meet with them and teach them some of the baseline knowledge, so that they can implement some of these [ECE] practices.

When new members join the staff, it can be difficult for teachers, as well as principals, to start from scratch with the process of implementing ECE skills that they learned about from their



professional development. Suzan said she also faced the challenge of needs assessment: “I am aware of some building [school] issues from last year, and I am using that as a jumping off point.” A situation such as that creates double-edged challenges for principals to implement into their professional development. In this regard, Suzan mentioned that “classroom management issues will most likely be a topic that we’ll be addressing.”

Time is another challenge in implementing professional development skills in schools.

Suzan elaborated on this concern:

My biggest challenge is always time, so when you’re sitting in the training [with or] without your computer and email in front of you, and you’re able to sit and plan how you might incorporate something, . . . you have a lot of different things going on, so finding the time to train the staff members and get them involved in that and monitor it, with all the busy parts of the day that get thrown at you. (Interview, Suzan, July 25, 2016)

Similar concerns about time were expressed by Laura as well. She said, “Time is probably the only challenge; trying to find time to do things, remember, and make it part of your practice, so sometimes it can be hard from year to year.” She lamented that the school management was too much of a time-consuming job, which left little room for teachers’ professional development, along with its legal issues. She expressed her surprise as “how time consuming and how you have to be careful [because] there are a lot of legal pieces to it.” Further, other administration activities, such as hiring, firing the staff, and their evaluations, “takes a lot of time, more than I dreamed it would.”

Jacky highlighted the background knowledge of school administrators who supervised ECE activities in the school as a challenge. He clarified it: “Principals or administrators that are overseeing early childhood programs may not have background knowledge in early childhood education and don’t know where to go to.” He emphasized that it is challenging for principals to understand all the complexities of EC programs. After participating in professional development training, these principals are left with “half-baked” ideas that do not translate sound professional development skills for teachers. Hence, Jacky’s recommendations included designating

administrators who have background knowledge to EC programs. He admitted that it helped him properly implement his own EC skills into school practices.

Jacky also identified a lack of research in the ECE domain. He lamented, “There are not a lot of research-based interventions, if you will; like, there are potentially for the older grades that say if a child is struggling in, hypothetically, letter identification.” So there are programs available for later grades, but unfortunately, in regard to ECE, “We just don’t have that [intervention program] readily available in early childhood, so that we could easily replicate it to solve our problems in implementation of early childhood initiatives at the schools.” Jacky further elaborated,

That is the reason to implement early childhood intervention programs; we have used higher grade models to solve early childhood issues. . . . We’re working through it, but it’s something we feel that we’re just kind of creating on our own, models for our early childhood program. We are using the model that is an elementary-high school-based model, and we are just trying to see how early childhood fits in it as well.

Laura identified a lack of financial resources as a constraint in professional development implementation in her school. She reiterated her stance of “encouraging” her staff to take part in professional development courses and earn credits. She continued, “I do encourage my staff to go out. I do have funds, but it doesn't completely reimburse them.” Such financial constraints allow teachers limited access to EC professional development opportunities. Further, she highlighted the hands-on practical expertise and technology training as a constraint in professional development, particularly regarding technology to teaching kids in EC programs. For her, it was quite difficult when it came to implementing the learned knowledge from her professional development training, although learning it at the workshop was simple. She admitted the need of hands-on experiences: “You need someone to sit there and hand-hold and get you in and show you what to do. So working in a small group where you're tackling how do I do this---that’s helpful hands-on with technology.”

### Future Professional Development Needs of the Principals

An important aspect of the principals' professional development includes their aptitude to advance in their career. All but one participant of the study emphasized the need for their own professional development in ECE, as well as other aspects of their job responsibilities. Brittaney underscored the requirement of her job "to work with teachers in developing their own skills and evaluating that, [and] teacher evaluation processes. . . . How to evaluate and support teachers in the classroom is also a big part of the training [she provides to principals]." She further explained her future professional development needs in the following terms:

I think putting all the fundamentals into place and keeping myself focused on what are the expectations that need to be laid out in the building and what are the structures---and by structures, I mean establishing good norms, good best practice, good systems for communication---that is critical. As for the expectations, we need to make sure that we're going to have a clear path. What does it look like? What are the goals? How are we going to measure progress?

Suzan was quite confident of her abilities, but again, she needed help to understand administrative affairs. She explained,

I don't know the system side of being a principal. Running the time clock, things of that nature, I have no idea about any of them. But in terms of being an early childhood administrator, I am very comfortable in that arena. Some of those administrative items I have never encountered before, I need assistance with those things.

In a similar statement, Jacky emphasized the intentional need to help teachers reflect on their own instruction. He said, "The planning and preparation, it is easy to kind of plan on the surface, but then to drill down and be as intentional as possible." In his view, there is need to train teachers on planning and implementation of classroom activities. Experiences gained through training can provide opportunities for teachers to reflect and assess their own instruction by evaluating it. Further, he explained his current professional needs: "Some of that would be setting up a system, a multi-tiered system of support for children, being able to find a good way to do that, we're dabbling in it, we're working through it."

Similarly, Laura expressed the need for professional development in equal scoring of teachers' evaluation in the school. She attributed the training she had received in this regard as a great help that enabled her to have a balanced approach in scoring teachers in their evaluations. She said,

Teachers and . . . scoring them, evaluating them with a similar lens, we don't want some principals to be really hard with teachers and some too easy, it shouldn't be like that, it should be what it is, what you are seeing and what score is that.

Hence, for her, her professional development enabled her to evaluate and score her teachers' performance fairly, without any biases or favors. She further expressed her current professional needs:

The practice has changed; we know a lot more about how to help them [teachers] communicate, and technology is a big part of that. I think an area that I need to improve would be technology. Schools have changed; now we have Facebook pages, we have Twitter accounts, I don't have a blog account, but maybe I should. So I think technology is an area that I have to continue my training.

Besides these current professional needs identified by the principals, mentoring new principals was also one of the important principals' future needs. Brittaney, in this regard, reflected, "I think mentoring is critical. I do think having someone who has experience, who has experienced some of the similar challenges, is critical." Jacky had the same opinion that mentorship of principals should be made an integral part of job-embedded professional development. He stated, "In real life, I don't think that administrator has to be the expert in every single area. I don't know if they need to be with me in every single day, but somebody to reflect upon, somebody to get suggestions." However, Suzan did not experience a need to have a mentor because of her own expertise in the field of ECE. Laura availed herself of mentoring benefits from other preschool and EC principals. She expressed,

I am in a group of elementary principals. There are eight elementary schools, so I meet with them, we have a boss, and that's pretty much like every week, just about, and three times a month. And being in that group and listening to them discuss topics or how to solve the problem or something that's come up has helped a lot. So it's kind of indirect but I just learned from them what to be worried about or what to get ahead of, so it's not a problem.

Based on the reflections of all research participants, it is obvious that all research participants are inclined toward their job satisfaction either by implementing the new knowledge in their context or by empowering their staff to work together toward shared goals. It is important to consider that for an uninterrupted growth of the staff and for smooth supervision, the provision of all resources (human and physical) is imperative. Fulfilling the organizational needs of the principals and equipping them with infrastructure can lead principals to overcome the challenges they face as they supervise their staff.

This chapter analyzed the qualitative data collected during the interviews, which were conducted to answer the research questions about in-service EC professional development opportunities available to EC principals and their contribution in building capacity of their staff. The data analysis revealed that there are unequal EC professional development opportunities for principals, and that principals experience a need for these EC professional development trainings. They are inspired to take part in the professional development training sessions and realize potential benefits. They tend to help their teachers improve classroom instruction in EC classes. However, they consider professional development to be part of their routine job requirement rather than an inspiration required for a visionary leader who aspires to bring transformational change to his or her school. The principals' focus on teacher evaluation reveals their tendency toward systematizing professional development processes rather than having a proactive role in identifying teachers' needs in improving their instruction. Results of the study show that principals assist their teachers in doing purposeful assessment of their students.

However, their approaches in identifying the needs of their teachers' professional development differ by school level, by survey, by holding meetings with teachers, by having dialogues with teachers individually, by leaving it to teachers to identify their needs themselves, and by enforcing team collaboration strategies. Principals' statements from interviews reflected a lack of proper professional development for principals and teachers at the district and school levels. Furthermore, the principals' identification of teacher retention, financial constraints,

time-management issues, and other management tasks seen as challenges presented the classic “over-burdening” of principals who grudge under the heavy responsibilities of school management as well as instructional improvement. In addition, “mentoring” was identified as a job-embedded professional development need of the principals. This conclusion, nevertheless, implies the limitations for data triangulation of multiple sources of data and cross validation of statements.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

This chapter proceeds with the summary of the findings. It then discusses major findings and my learning through this study and presents implications and limitations of the study.

#### Summary of Major Findings

This study was conducted to explore the in-service professional development trainings available to EC school principals in selected sites in northern Illinois and how these in-service professional development training opportunities helped these school principals perform their job responsibilities successfully. The data collected through semi-structured interviews revealed that general and EC in-service professional development training opportunities for preschool and EC principals vary from district to district. In some districts, there are sufficient training opportunities for EC principals to pursue, whereas in some districts, principals pursued professional development trainings on their own. The data also revealed that all the principals had ECE and leadership degrees in their academic careers and had received in-service EC professional development trainings in some stages of their professional careers.

The data showed that the in-service professional development trainings these principals received were mostly related to administration and supervision. Also, these principals held various points of view regarding available professional development trainings. Some principals appreciated professional development trainings provided by their districts, but other principals appreciated privately offered professional development trainings. The data showed that all principals perceive professional development of their teachers as an outcome of collaborative teamwork of administration and staff. The data also highlighted challenges principals face when

implementing knowledge learned from professional development. These challenges included time, hiring and retention of teachers, and financial resources. Moreover, the data revealed future professional development needs of these principals in the areas of communication and technology, teacher evaluation and scoring, planning and preparation, establishing multi-tiered support system for children, and job-embedded mentoring by some experienced professionals.

### Discussion

Principals are the building blocks of the educational system. As educational leaders, principals are expected to advance organizational goals in a sophisticated fashion through articulating state laws and supporting their teachers to ensure student learning (Rieckhoff & Larsen, 2012; Schulte, Slate, & Onwuegbuzie, 2010; Stamopoulos, 2012; Talan, Bloom, & Kelton, 2014). This study intended to explore EC principals' capacity-building through available professional development opportunities and the ways in which these opportunities helped these principals improve the instruction and curriculum implementation at their schools. Bearing in mind the purpose of the study, four research questions were developed: (1) What in-service EC professional development opportunities are available for EC principals? (2) How do EC professional development opportunities help principals supervise their EE programs, including curriculum implementation? (3) How do EC professional development opportunities help principals support EC staff? and (4) What are principals' current professional development needs in terms of supporting their EC staff and improving the quality of the EC program?

The findings of the first research question shed light on the available professional development opportunities to EC principals. The type and number of professional development opportunities varied and were uneven from principal to principal and from district to district (Casserly, Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, & Palacios, 2013). Further, most of the available professional development opportunities were related to administration and supervision of the school, and professional development in ECE was minimal (Stamopoulos, 2012). The professional and



educational background of the research participants also varied (Whitebook, Kipnis, Sakai, & Austin, 2012). Further, they acknowledged the benefits received through the professional development opportunities available to them (Henry & Barnett, 2004; Rieckhoff & Larsen, 2012; Stamopoulos, 2012). Participants also considered privately available professional development opportunities, and participants with less professional experiences pursued professional development opportunities on their own.

This study found that in the absence of formal professional development in ECE, principals were using their prior knowledge. This knowledge was based on their previous work experiences as teachers or assistant principals in EC education programs. These findings are consistent with previous research (e.g., Gomez et al., 2015; Talan et al., 2014) that indicates that most of the EC principals have worked as EC teachers or have worked in ECE settings in their careers. This finding points toward the scarcity of proper EC leadership preparation and development mechanism that could produce quality and visionary EC leaders. This may be a reason for principals in leadership positions believing they are compelled to seek other professional development opportunities to satisfy their job requirements.

For the second research question, participants acknowledged professional development in ECE as an essential fragment of school leadership. Further, their perceptions reflected their approach, considering professional development only a licensure requirement. Although EC professional development received less importance as compared to their job requirement (Ryan et al., 2011), these principals' perceptions highlighted an important finding of this study: lack of a visionary leader. The participants demonstrated professional knowledge regarding their field of action through collaborating and delegating responsibilities to their staff but could not provide a single example of an innovative decision taken as a result of collaboration and delegation of responsibilities to their staff. This finding also posits questions on the objectives of the professional development that these participants received.

The reason behind this may be the increased number of administrative tasks to fulfill district or state laws requirements (Casserly et al., 2013). This finding implies that participants' acquisition of professional knowledge and knowledge to utilize the innovative processes needs further professional development (Muhammad, 2010; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). Further, in response to the second research question, participants highlighted an important aspect of making EC leadership more doable. According to participants, replacing the current professional development mechanism and establishing job-embedded professional development systems is critical. The second research question also aimed to gather evidence that could support the efficacy of the EC professional development training the principals received and have applied in their context. In this regard, all the principals reported some challenges that kept them from implementing the knowledge and ideas they acquired through these professional development training opportunities. These challenges include time (Casserly et al., 2013; Donaldson, 2013; Ferrandino, 2001), teacher turnover (Darling-Hammond, 2003), teacher hiring and firing (Donaldson, 2013), financial constraints (Donaldson, 2013), increased administrative tasks (Casserly et al., 2013; ), teachers' evaluation/assessment (Stiggins & Duke, 2008), background knowledge of EC administrators (e.g., Duncan et al., 2011; Pounder & Crow, 2005), technology (Sincar, 2013), and lack of research-based interventions in ECE.

It is evident from the previous research that there is a strong correlation between high-quality teaching and improved student learning outcomes. Further, to ensure quality teaching, the role of leadership is important (Aubrey et al., 2012; Gomez et al., 2015; Schulte et al., 2010). In response to the third research question, which aimed to explore practical evidence that could reflect the support principals have provided to their EC staff, the conclusions indicate that this needs further research. However, findings also revealed that EC principals have adopted and introduced the culture of collaboration in their schools for shared goals and improved instruction (Marks & Printy, 2003). These principals' approach reflects their efficacy and attitude toward building environments of trust and establishing a system of learning from each other's

experiences (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Youngs & King, 2002). The principals' reflections also disclosed the need to establish mechanisms inside their institution through which the professional needs of their staff could be channeled.

In response to "how" these principals assess the professional needs of their teachers, it was found that the principals used various approaches and strategies for identifying and assessing the needs of their staff. These included monthly meetings to provide their staff an opportunity to develop their professional development plans themselves, pairing experienced teachers with novice teachers to identify areas in which they need support, having dialogues with teachers in determining their professional goals, using evaluation surveys, and leaving it to teachers to identify their professional needs. Findings reported a lack of planning for professional development trainings for teachers by the principals toward addressing professional needs and supporting their teachers for improved instruction. Bredeson and Johansson (2000) identified four extents to which principals can affect their teachers' development professionally. These extents include establishing principals as instructional leaders; building a learning environment; involving themselves directly in designing, delivering, and selecting training content; and evaluating professional development outcomes.

The absence of planning for professional development training for teachers by the principals indicates that principal preparation programs are not preparing principals to play their role effectively in the professional development of their teaching staff. Perhaps the focus of these principal preparation programs is on building competencies in the domain of administration and little efforts on other components of the organization (Fink & Resnick, 2001). Principals' greater focus on administrative tasks and lesser attention to their teachers' professional development also shows that there is an absence of monitoring and follow-up mechanisms at the district and state levels to follow up on whether principals are doing their jobs effectively or they need any on-the-job support. Findings also suggested an evidence of over-burdening administrative tasks that principals must complete (Bredeson & Johansson, 2000).

In response to the fourth question, participants reported further professional needs in the areas of technology (Duncan et al., 2011; Gregory, 2015), teacher evaluation and scoring, planning and preparation, and ECE supervision and administrative tasks (Caruso, 1991; Duncan et al., 2011). Except for one principal, all the principals showed their inclination toward having school-based or job-embedded professional support through experienced mentors (Daresh, 2004; Reyes, 2003). Findings highlighted an important aspect regarding policymaking and its implementation for EC principals' professional development. The literature review for professional development needs of principals completed by Duncan et al. (2011) also identified the same professional needs of principals. This finding implies that general principal preparation programs are still struggling in preparing principals in technical areas such as financing, administrative and supervision, planning, implementing, and supporting processes within their schools.

#### Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to collecting data from only four principals, due to the shortage of time and the busy schedule of the participants. Further, due to the lack of triangulation of multiple sources of data, such as teachers' interviews, classroom observations, and document analyses, it may be problematic to make generalizable and concrete conclusions that could be practical to a broader viewpoint. I sought further feedback from one of my university fellows during the process of coding the data. In addition, although my university fellow recommended adding some more codes and considering some codes that were not clear, establishing inter-rater reliability with more raters would have improved the credibility of the current study.

#### Conclusion

This study was conducted on a limited scale with a small sample size using only one

research instrument. Therefore, it is problematic to make conclusions comparable to large-scale qualitative studies due to lack of triangulation of findings and the absence of other sources of data, such as teachers' interviews, classroom observations, or documentation analysis. The range of responsibilities expected by a principal is multi-dimensional. EC principals with extra responsibilities of meeting state standards must also supervise teaching and instruction, plan staff development, execute fundraising, lead curriculum development, recruit teachers, communicate with staff and parents, keep records, and plan and implement programs. To implement these huge responsibilities, principals' education, professional development, and professional experiences are critical. The professional development opportunities in ECE available to a principal can make a difference if they are designed and delivered as per the principal's context and previous professional experiences.

Study findings highlighted uneven professional development opportunities in ECE and principals' perceptions of supervising EC programs and staff development. Participants identified some structural, organizational, and policy-level deficits for designing and delivering professional development trainings from district, state, and private sides. Study findings also indicated some challenges EC principals face when implementing new knowledge and ideas learned through professional development trainings. These principals also emphasized current professional needs in terms of supervising EC programs at their schools and providing support to their staff.

Consequently, when designing professional development trainings for principals who supervise EC programs, it is important to consider principals' personal and professional context and conduct a needs assessment to design a relevant and flexible professional development mechanism that fit principals' individual and organizational needs. Moreover, considering previous research studies as guidelines can be the best option for designing and planning professional preparation trainings for principals of EC programs.

### Implications and Recommendations

Principals are main human capital who can initiate a change or implement a reform within their school premises. The initiation for any change requires principals to equip themselves with the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions, lead, and direct their staff to achieve set targets. Principals' built capacity can help them make informed decisions, leading and guiding their staff toward a common goal and accomplishments. As stated previously, the study was conducted on a limited scale; the implications highlighted by this study could have enormous effects on research and policy if it was possible to interview more principals.

### For Research

The study highlighted areas that need further research. Due to departmental and institutional reasons, the study was limited by involving a small number of participants through a single research instrument. If future studies were to be conducted with a larger sample and extended means of data collection (e.g., teachers' interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis), then more sophisticated findings would help answer the questions in the current study. Further, this study highlighted other aspects of EC leadership that obstructed principals' performance and inclinations toward their responsibilities. The results suggest that principals avoided implementation of new ideas due to increased number of responsibilities.

Action research is another way in which researchers can respond to unanswered questions surrounding this study. Through action research, principals' perceptions regarding supervising EC programs and supporting EC staff can be documented quite well. Findings of action research may help lead to answers to modify the current structure of principal preparation programs and in-service professional development trainings. Further, there is a great number of research studies that have shone light on teachers' professional development and its impact on the overall growth of organizations and student learning outcomes, but current information provided in most studies regarding EC principals' professional development is inadequate (e.g.,

Bush, 2012; Gomez et al., 2015; Sheridan et al., 2009). Therefore, there is a need to embed more aspects of EC principals' in-service professional development in the upcoming research studies. Disposition of principals to disseminate and practice their knowledge and skills and the impact of ongoing ECE interventions in EC programs are the future research areas that can broaden the sphere of research in the domain of EC principals' professional development.

#### For Policy

Important acts, such as the NCLB Act and the Nation at Risk, have compelled education authorities to revisit their functional and organizational structures, including providing professional support to teaching and supervisory staff. The findings of previous studies (Casserly et al., 2013; Donaldson, 2013; Ferrandino, 2001) and one of the important findings of the present study highlighted the fact that all principals reported an absence of implementation of new ideas and skills learned in professional development training programs. The main reason was amplified administrative and supervisory tasks due to which dissemination and application of the learned knowledge and skills remained unfocused. To address this challenge and help these principals support and supervise EC programs purposefully, professional development mechanisms on district and state levels need to be restructured.

Further, findings of this study have highlighted the lack of follow-up mechanisms and on-the-job support to further disseminate and apply the ideas and knowledge learned in the professional development trainings. Further, for providing on-the-job and job-embedded professional development to current EC principals, mentoring has been proved to be an effective strategy (Daresh, 2004; Reyes, 2003). Despite its effectiveness, mentoring can be ineffective and challenging if it lacks good support from the districts, endures a mismatch between mentor and mentee, or its curriculum is not designed according to the needs of the principals (Gettys, Martin, & Bigby, 2010). This finding may imply the inclusion of an organized and sustainable follow-up and on-the-job support mechanism, as well as a sustainable and comprehensive

mentoring program for principals' professional development in the policy guidelines.

Likewise, for pre-service principal preparation, equipping principals with only theoretical knowledge is not the solution to challenges principals face when they start to work in real situations (Sheridan et al., 2009). To address this issue, principal preparation policy must be revised to improve the quality of current principal internship programs. Sackney and Walker (cited in Duncan et al., 2011) describe the ineffectiveness of principal internships as these internships have failed to accommodate the needs of the principals, according to the complexities of their responsibilities as principals. Keeping in view the importance of an effective internship for principal preparation, it is imperative to modify the policy guidelines regarding the duration of time the developing principal spends with his internship mentor. The previously mentioned recommendations for policy actions can hold that all principal preparation institutes utilize their best resources (physical and human) to prepare new principals in such a way that the gap between theory and practice can be filled effectively.



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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
INFORMATION LETTER

May 1, 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Kaneez Fatima, and I am an international graduate student at Northern Illinois University, seeking my master's degree in early childhood education. I am writing to request you and your teachers' participation in my research study, titled *In-service Professional Development of Principals for Early Childhood Education*. I will be conducting this research in May and June 2016.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about preschool and EC principals' professional development experiences that they have received to improve early childhood programs. The findings of the study may be helpful in identifying professional development needs for preschool and EC principals to supervise, evaluate, and support their early childhood programs. Another important reason for this study is that the findings may help policymakers and educators develop professional development ideas for preschool and EC principals. Pakistan has an issue with a lack of preparation for elementary school teachers. I have been a member of Early Childhood Education policy framework development team in Pakistan. I hope that when I return to Pakistan, I can use the findings of the study to plan and offer appropriate professional development experience for preschool and EC principals.

If you participate in the study, I will conduct a 40- to 50-minute in-person/telephone interview. The principal interview includes questions about teaching experience with young children, professional development experience to better support/guide early childhood teachers, and the areas in further professional development that are needed to improve the quality of early childhood programs.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time (even after you sign the consent form). With permission, all interviews will be audio-taped, and tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Confidentiality will be maintained by using pseudonyms for all participants' names in all forms of writing (including publications) and communication. You are free to ask questions about the study or about being a participant by emailing me at [email address]. If you have any questions pertaining to IRB or my research study, please contact my research advisor, Dr. Myoungwhon Jung, at [mjung@niu.edu](mailto:mjung@niu.edu) or 815-753-9465.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Kaneez Fatima  
Graduate student  
Department of Special and Early Education  
Northern Illinois University  
Phone: [phone]  
Email: [email address]

APPENDIX B  
CONSENT FORM



Professional Development of principals for Early Childhood Education (initial by each item, sign bottom): Principal Participant

I agree to participate in the research project titled *In-service Professional Development of Principals for Early Childhood Education*, being conducted by Kaneez Fatima, a graduate student at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of the study is to explore principals' professional expertise for improving the quality of ECE classroom practices in the United States. The findings of the study may help my school in particular and the education discipline in general.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to share my collaboration with school staff support to improve curriculum and teaching practices at the classroom level in response to interview questions. I have been informed that my interview will last from 40-50 minutes at a time and/or place of my choosing. The researcher will audiotape my interview for transcription and future analysis.

I have been informed that there are no potential risks or discomforts I could experience during this study. I understand that all information gathered through this interview will be kept confidential by storing the obtained data in a locked place, using a pseudonym in manuscripts, and not sharing my identity with anyone except the researcher.

I realize that Northern Illinois University does not provide for compensation, neither does the university carry insurance to cover injury incurred as a result of participation in a university sponsored research project.

I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice, and that if I have any questions concerning this study, I may contact: Kaneez Fatima at [email address] or [street address].

For additional questions, I may contact Dr. Myoungwhon Jung, associate professor of Early Childhood Education in the Department of Special and Early Education at Northern Illinois University (email address/phone number).

If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

Signature of Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that my interview will be audiotaped for transcription and future analysis.

Signature of Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PRINCIPALS

Topic: In-service professional development of Principals for Early Childhood Education

Interviewer: Kaneez Fatima

Interviewee: Preschool and EC Principals

Place: Urban Midwestern elementary School.

Duration of Interview: 40-50 minutes

Date of Interview:

Time of Interview:

Questions:

Tell me about your educational background and your current position.

Tell me about in-service professional development you have attended.

A growing number of states are providing professional development on relevant early childhood content to school administrators. Have you participated in professional development that focuses on early childhood education areas? If so, tell me more about your professional development experience (e.g., topics, frequency, relevance to your current position) and how it would help you as a school administrator?

Give me some examples that you have implemented ideas from professional development into early childhood programs in your school.

How do you assess early childhood teachers' professional development needs? Have you planned professional development for your early childhood staff? If so, tell me more about it.

What are your strengths and professional development needs in terms of supporting your early childhood staff and improving the quality of early childhood program?