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Missouri Legislator and Administrator Perceptions
of Federal Government Involvement in Education

by

Roger Allen Woods Jr.

April 2017

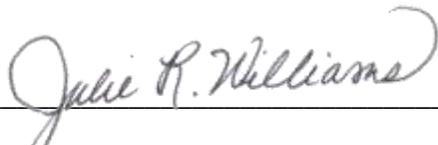
A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
School of Education

Missouri Legislator and Administrator Perceptions
of Federal Government Involvement in Education

by

Allen Woods

This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
Lindenwood University, School of Education



Dr. Julie Williams, Dissertation Chair

Feb 10, 2017

Date



Dr. Sherry DeVore, Committee Member

Feb 10, 2017

Date



Dr. Terry Reid, Committee Member

Feb 10, 2017

Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Roger Allen Woods, Jr.

Signature: Roger Allen Woods Date: Feb 10, 2017

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Abstract

There are very few studies on the views of school administrators and state legislators regarding federal government mandates for schools. Bolman and Deal (2015) believed people align themselves to survive and thrive in the political framework where resources are scarce, and the aspects of power and conflict inform decisions (Douglas & Mehra, 2015; Pourrajab & Ghani, 2016). This study focused on the thought processes of both school administrators who implement federal mandates and state legislators who navigate funding for federal mandates. Leaders of the political parties of Missouri and school administrators were interviewed to gain insight into the motivation and political views which drive decision making at the state and local levels. The findings of this investigation indicated opinions varied widely on the nature of federal government involvement in education, and political party affiliation had some influence on the belief systems of the participants interviewed. This affiliation runs deep in today's politics and may be difficult to overcome. Data from the study clearly indicated public school administrators favored funding for preschool education yet did not support charter school expansion. Findings from the study offer more than a few implications for both administrative and legislative practice. Administrative interview data could be used to inform legislative decisions for public schools. Bipartisan conversations among stakeholders may offer common ground on these topics for the benefit of Missouri students.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The role of the federal government in local education has grown over the 240-year history of the United States (Tanner, 2013). Until 1867, the federal government was not involved in public education (Chopin, 2013). When the Department of Education began in 1867, it was established to gather information on effective teaching and to get that information to teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Good teachers positively impact students' academic progress (Brevetti, 2014). Since 1965, the federal government has become more involved in local education (Cross, 2010). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was the first major federal piece of education legislation (Cross, 2010). Subsequent reauthorization and changes made by the federal government have been greater over the last 51 years (Miller, 2014).

The federal government's involvement in education has had a trickle-down effect on state legislators and school administrators (Krebs, 2015). This effect has not always been studied in-depth, but understanding mandates from the federal government and the effects on state government and local schools are essential. This research project was designed to elicit responses from Missouri legislators and school administrators about their beliefs concerning the "help" federal government either mandates or provides. The administrators were chosen from different parts of the state and various sizes of school districts. The legislators were equally divided between Democrat and Republican and were selected from both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Background of the Study

The United States was founded with a structure of education not directly overseen by a centralized system of education (Geier, 2014). The founding fathers wanted this form of educational system because of their fear of the power of the British monarchy (Geier, 2014). In 1867, the first Department of Education was created to obtain information on schools and to help the States establish effective school systems (Cross, 2010). Over the years, the name and location of the agency have changed within the executive branch, but the emphasis on helping and improving teaching has always been the same (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In 1980, Congress moved the Department of Education to a Cabinet-level agency (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

However, over the past 50 years, the federal government has become increasingly involved in the education of children (Chopin, 2013). On April 9, 1965, Congress enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), the most expansive federal education bill ever passed to date (Asen, 2012). The ESEA was reauthorized by President Gerald Ford in 1974, and President Jimmy Carter reauthorized the ESEA again in 1978 (Asen, 2012). In 1981, President Ronald Regan reauthorized the ESEA for six years with an automatic extension for a seventh year (Asen, 2012). President Bill Clinton created the Improving America's School Act (an ESEA reauthorization), which gave more federal money to school districts with higher concentrations of low-income students (Cross, 2010). In 2001, President George Bush renamed the ESEA the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (Cross, 2010).

The NCLB Act, also known as Public Law 107-110, was enacted in 2002 (Chopin, 2013). The NCLB Act represented a step forward for the nation's children in many respects, particularly as it shined a light on where students were making progress and where they needed additional support, regardless of race, income, zip code, disability, home language, or background (Miller, 2014). The law was scheduled for revision in 2007, and, over time, NCLB's rigid requirements became increasingly unworkable for schools and educators (U. S. Department of Education, 2015). The NCLB Act "narrowed the curriculum, induced schools and teachers to focus on what is being tested, led to teaching to the test, induced schools to manipulate the testing pool, and in some well-publicized cases induced some teachers and administrators to cheat" (Ladd, 2016, p. 52).

Recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015 (Klein, 2016). This bipartisan measure reauthorized the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students (Krebs, 2015). According to Ladd (2016):

Test-based accountability has had limited success even in raising student test scores. One careful study of NCLB finds small to modest effects on 4th- and possibly 8th-grade math scores and no effects on reading scores. Since the introduction of NCLB in 2002, scores on NAEP, the nation's report card, show little change in the trajectory in math and virtually no progress in reading. Indeed, the most recent 2015 scores show downturns in both subjects. (p. 53)

The focus for the ESSA is to reduce testing and give teachers more teaching time in the classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Conceptual Framework

In traditional organizational structure, policies and decisions are typically made by those at the top (Bolman & Deal, 2015). Bolman and Deal's (2015) political frame asserts interdependence, conflicting interests, scarcity, and power relations result in political action. For this study, the primary investigator used the political frame as the conceptual framework from which to understand the power dynamics among the perceptual responses from the sample.

It is assumed there are political forces at work which drive decisions for policy creation and advocacy (Bolman & Deal, 2015). In organizations, there is a linkage between power and dependency with individuals and groups becoming interdependent (Bolman & Deal, 2015). The relationship among those with power is multidirectional, and therefore it may be assumed, political decisions and stances are set through ongoing processes of negotiation and interaction among stakeholders (Bolman & Deal, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

There have been very few studies over the views of school administrators and state legislators regarding federal government mandates and the impact of funding on public schools. According to Gier (2014), the federal government, while intentionally absent from the United States Constitution, has always maintained a subversive desire to influence the nation's education system. A limited number of studies have examined the relationship the impact of federal education legislation has on the Local Educational Agency (LEA).

Purpose of the Study

It was the desire of the primary investigator to produce data which may be used to fill this gap of knowledge and more clearly understand how federal governmental decisions impact the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators. Specific topics examined were state-funded pre-schools, charter schools, school accountability, and uniform national standards. Data were gathered in the form of interviews with school administrators and state legislators to determine their perceptions of the mandates and funding issues association with these topics. This study will help shed light on the thought processes of school administrators, those implementing federal mandates, and of state legislators, those who must navigate funding for federal government mandates.

Research questions. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators toward expanding high-quality, state-funded preschool for children from low- and moderate-income families building from the Administration's Preschool Development Grants program?
2. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators toward expanding support for high-performing public charter schools for high-need students with state monies?
3. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators regarding measures for school accountability?
4. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators regarding the use of uniform national standards?

Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

Conservative. Those who are conservative believe in the value of established and traditional practices in politics and society (*Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary*, 2016).

Creditability or trustworthiness. Creditability and trustworthiness are terms often used in research to encompass not only instrument validity and reliability, but internal validity as well (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). On April 9, 1965, Congress enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) (Public Law 89-10), the most comprehensive federal education bill ever passed. It is significant to note the bill was enacted less than three months after it was introduced, as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" (Gameson, McDermott, & Reed, 2015).

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015. This bipartisan measure reauthorized the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Liberal. Those who are liberal believe the government should be active in supporting social and political change (*Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary*, 2016).

Missouri Learning Standards. The Missouri Learning Standards define the knowledge and skills students need in each grade level and course for success in college, other post-secondary training, and careers (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2016). These grade-level and course-level expectations are aligned to the Show-Me Standards (MODESE, 2016).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Also known as Public Law 107-110 enacted in 2002, the NCLB Act represented a step forward for the nation's children in many respects, particularly as it shined a light on where students were making progress and where they needed additional support, regardless of race, income, zip code, disability, home language, or background. The law was scheduled for revision in 2007, and over time, the NCLB Act's prescriptive requirements became increasingly unworkable for schools and educators (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Reliability. Reliability is the consistency of inferences over time, location, and circumstances (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Unaccredited. The Annual Performance Report (APR) score is used to differentiate among LEA performance and to make classification determinations of accreditation: Accredited with Distinction, Accredited, Provisional, and Unaccredited. Unaccredited districts earn less than 50% of the APR points possible (MODESE, 2014).

Validity. Validity is the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the inferences researchers make based specifically on the data they collect (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Limitations and Assumptions

Limitations. The primary investigator designed the interview survey instrument for this study. After the IRB had been approved, the instrument was field-tested on a small sample of administrators and politicians to determine whether the interview survey provided the intended data. Validity and reliability were tested for the independent variables (administrator or politician), for the dependent variable of perception, and for the control variable of political affiliation and administrative role.

It was assumed the interviewees were forthright and honest to yield meaningful results to the questions and hypotheses. According to Jansen (2015), “The most obvious potential of a qualitative research interview is that it allows us to see the interviewee as a resource” (p. 37). However, the foremost concern for this interview effort was an attempt by the primary investigator to describe a specific situation viewed by specific individuals (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Assumptions. Researchers’ beliefs and assumptions shape the research they undertake (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). The primary investigator adopted a personal epistemology for this study to seek to understand the social reality of political influence on public education. Using the political framework of Bolman and Deal (2015), it was assumed administrators’ and politicians’ conceptions of the federal government have significant and interrelated impacts upon how each perceives federal legislation. The political framework consists of ideas and assumptions which help the researcher assemble information into a coherent pattern (Bolman & Deal, 2015). Therefore, for this research, it was assumed each leader interviewed possessed an agenda, had a power base and operated under the umbrella of organizational politics (Bolman & Deal, 2015).

As noted in Fraenkel et al. (2015), it may be difficult to generalize findings from a particular study to the people or settings beyond those used in the sample. In Missouri, there are significantly more Republican than Democratic Congresspersons represented in both the House of Representatives and Senate, according to the Official Missouri State Website. Generalization is a limitation, as replication of this study may result in different outcomes in other states with different composites. The political structure in Missouri may decrease the generalizability of the findings to other state structures (Creswell, 2014).

Summary

Gone are the days when schools received sufficient pupil funding, had autonomy for expenditures, and limited school choice by parents (Ooghe & Schokkaert, 2016). This study included an examination of the perspectives of state legislators and school administrators in the areas of preschool funding, charter school expansion, consistent accountability requirements, and uniform national standards. The political frame of Bolman and Deal (2015) provided an appropriate framework to support the study.

In Chapter Two, relevant literature is aligned with each of the research questions for this study to allow for a comprehensive examination of the research findings. The methodology of the study is presented in Chapter Three. The research design, population and sample, data collection, and analysis are discussed. Ethical considerations of the study are also presented. Chapter Four includes an analysis of the data, and the findings, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research are discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Accountability based on standards, rewards, punishments, and assessment is at the forefront of today's educational world (Fullan, 2011). Successful ideas like co-teaching have come and will eventually go, as no one idea has stuck in public education except the growing need to test more and sustain teacher and school accountability (Walsh, 2012). For successful educational policy reform to take place through a cultivation of equal opportunity for all students, school leaders and policymakers must develop and adopt policies that shape students' and families' everyday out-of-school lives (Miller, Pavlakis, Lac, & Hoffman, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

There are conceptual frameworks which drive the epistemological or ontological assumptions of leaders within an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2015). According to Bolman and Deal (2015):

A frame is an amalgam of beliefs and assumptions that you carry in your head to help you understand and negotiate some part of your world. An accurate frame makes it easier to (a) know what's going on, (b) see more options, and (c) make better choices. (p. 35)

Bolman and Deal (as cited in Fruehauf, Al-Khalifa, & Coniker, 2015) proposed a four-frame model for understanding organization which consists of a Structural Frame, Human Resources Frame, Political Frame, and Symbolic Frame. The Political Frame details how power and perception are gained by skill sets, personal reputation, and personality traits such as coercion within the organization and was used as the conceptual framework for this study (Fruehauf, Al-Khalifa, & Coniker, 2015). According to Lyon, Nadershahi,

Nattestad, Kachalia, and Hammer (2014), “The political frame views organizations as arenas of scarce resources where power and influence are constantly affecting the allocation of resources among individuals or groups” (p. 19).

Leadership frames. The political frame is made up of general issues, with finance the foremost concern (Hellsten, Noonan, Preston, & Prytula, 2013). There exist factions in the political world which require administrators to develop a voice with politicians to avoid being discounted by special interest groups, or others, who seek allocation of educational funding (Hall, 2013). Power is the main component of the political framework, but the development and growth of that power varies (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Political change may begin at the grassroots level or at a more executive level (Bolman & Deal, 2013). People align themselves to survive and thrive in the political framework (Douglas & Mehra, 2015).

One of the key assumptions within this context is that an organization has people who are skillful, yet it also has special interest groups (Pourrajab & Ghani, 2016). Resources are scarce in the political framework, and the aspects of power and conflict cause very tense and divergent decisions to be made (Pourrajab & Ghani, 2016). Bolman and Deal (2013) identified nine different sources of power: coercive power, reward control, reputation, personal, network or alliance, expertise, network, framing, and agenda. The political framework focuses on competition where leaders use compromise, negotiation, and consultation to accomplish goals (Pourrajab & Ghani, 2016). The allocation of resources to particular groups or individuals is affected by power and influence in the political world (Hellsten et al., 2013).

A failure to understand stakeholder interests may damage an organization, as focusing solely on self-interests may lead to a lack of success (Douglas & Mehra, 2015). Organizational effectiveness is affected by the political frame, the use of power, and competition (Bernardes et al., 2015). Decision makers believe in the political frame, personal interests guide information shared with stakeholders (Douglas & Mehra, 2016). Within this framework, many aspects dominate a leader's life and necessitate coercion, compromise, and negotiation as valuable skills for effective leaders (Hellston et al., 2013). In the political framework, persuasion is used first, but if that does not work then negotiation is used, and eventually, coercion may be used if the other tactics fail (Bernardes et al., 2015).

The political frame is full of competing interests in conflict for scarce resources (Albino, 2013). Steve Jobs is an example of a warrior who used his power and influence to accomplish the goals set forward (Bolman & Deal, 2015). Mr. Jobs's tenacity was legendary, and his public spat with former Disney CEO Michael Eisner was very public, ending with Eisner getting fired from Disney (Bolman & Deal, 2015). Political leadership can be messy and complicated, where egos or lack of ability to make difficult decisions play a major role in the framework (Hall, 2013).

Weak leadership and failure to make a difficult decision early were evident in the Penn State football scandal (Albino, 2013). Joe Paterno was the long-time Penn State football coach (Albino, 2013). He knew about his assistant Jerry Sandusky's sexual transgressions with boys but did nothing about it; the school administration also knew about Mr. Sandusky's sexual abuses to boys and chose to do nothing (Albino, 2013). The lack of making a hard decision early by Coach Paterno led to the school president trying

to hide the scandal later (Albino, 2013). Neither man chose the hard decision early, and it cost them their jobs and reputations (Albino, 2013).

Positionality and the relation to epistemology and ontology of process. One may not consider the terms *political* and *ontology* together. In the past, consideration for political ontology was left to philosophers (Hay, 2011). The term ontology refers to the nature of being and guides researchers in examining the interrelationships which exist in a domain of discourse (Harrison, 2006). For this study, it may be assumed each member of the sample came with his or her own ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Ontology originates from philosophy, physics, and religion but has been expanded to social and political theory (Stout & Staton, 2011). According to Norman Blaikie:

[Ontology] refers to the claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social [or, by extension, political] inquiry makes about the nature of social [or political] reality—claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with one another. (as cited in Hay, 2011, p. 80)

Ontology includes the most essential qualities of reality which guide what and how research is undertaken (Harrison, 2006). Ontology relates to being, or what exists; political ontology relates to political being, or what politically exists (Stout & Stanton, 2011).

An analyst's position on political ontology is engaged to inspect the nature of the political structure to be examined (Hays, 2011). All political theory, regardless of the nature of the theory, presupposes a political ontology (Gibbons, 2009). Ontology and epistemology go together with ontology existing first (Avramenko, 2009). Western

philosophy looks at people as separate from society, but neither ontology nor epistemology exists without each other (Hays, 2011).

Alfred Whitehead (1861-1947) (as cited in Harrison, 2006) developed a philosophy consisting of many important ideas for political theory and public administration. According to Stout and Stanton (2011):

While modern liberalism was in Whitehead's day a rather diffuse movement, what its proponents all shared was a common aim to reconcile individuality and sociability through a theory of human nature. Process philosophy, too, is concerned with a proper understanding of individuality and sociability, and this, not only as a feature of human nature but of reality as a whole. (p. 277)

Whitehead developed concrescence, which is the process of "becoming concrete" where individual expressions become concrete as entities, and the world is comprised of these entities (Stout & Stanton, 2011, p. 278). The purpose of concrescence of life is enjoyment, but to consider the enjoyment of any one entity, all other entities must be considered (Stout & Stanton, 2011). Realism is objective laws of political behavior based on fixed human nature (Harrison, 2006). Each participant in the study interprets life through his or her reality as framed by ontological or epistemological views (Stout & Stanton, 2011).

Epistemology surrounds questions about the nature of, sources of, and legitimacy of knowledge (Horwitz, 2012). Another way to describe epistemology is knowledge as justified and genuine belief, even though true belief is not attainable (Harrison, 2006). Political Epistemology is defined as the study of political ideas and knowledge (Gibbons,

2009). Political epistemology is tied to the impact of political institutions, the impact of welfare systems, and specific policies on health and health equity (Stout & Stanton, 2011). The field of political epistemology has grown at a rapid pace over the last decade with political factors influencing the field (Horwitz, 2012). The United States President's political party and the depth of liberalism or conservatism in the state and federal legislatures are all aligned by the ontological and epistemological assumptions of each (Gibbons, 2009).

The government may be defined as self-organization where individuals come together to create a whole system with rules individuals of the system are expected to follow (Harrison, 2006). Complex and random processes are rule-ordered, a complex system where behaviors seem random but can be simulated with a few simple rules (Harrison, 2006). Governance is looked upon as facilitating a way of living together through a relational process of becoming individuals but collectively working on a process of harmonizing differences through interlocking networks (Stout & Stanton, 2011). A common language must be developed with all political and administrative participants to try and accomplish a common goal (Tackas, 2009).

The political spectrum is a broad topic that needs to be narrowed down; there are mass citizens involved, but also other major players such as journalists, politicians, lobbyists, and other interest groups (Tackas, 2009). An understanding of the distribution of power is crucial, as politicians answer to their constituents but also to special interest groups that help fund reelection campaigns (Hays, 2011). These separate groups are many times at conflict (Hays, 2011). It is believed some politicians use political power to justify their beliefs (Harrison, 2006). The assumption politicians attend to voters'

interests may be tarnished when politicians demonstrate they can be influenced by power and money (Tackas, 2009).

Over time, political epistemology has taken a positivist approach, but that approach has evolved (Avrameko, 2009). Auguste Comte, the person believed to have started positivism, believed the only way to understand was to observe (Harrison, 2006). In positivism, knowledge cannot be gained without observation (Avrameko, 2009). In politics, observation is tied to political beliefs and does not apply in its purest form (Gibbons, 2009). Oddly, persons acquire beliefs about themselves which do not necessarily:

...form a unified, coherent whole. They shift from one to another way of thinking about themselves as the discourse shifts and as their positions within varying storylines are taken up. Each of these possible selves can be internally contradictory or contradictory with other possible selves located in different story lines. (Jansen, 2015, p. 33)

The way a person focuses on a way of thinking or feeling shifts due to situations and relationships (Jansen, 2015).

Knowledge is an evolutionary process always changing based on environment and experience (Harrison, 2006). When pragmatism is added to the positivist theory, it adds justification to political beliefs (Horwitz, 2012). Pragmatism only accepts knowledge as tentative and preliminary, but through pragmatism, people may use the scientific goal of objectivity (Harrison, 2006). Evolutionary epistemology developed from pragmatism where knowledge is an evolutionary process continually changing to its environment

(Tackas, 2009). Politicians develop theories through interactions with their constituents (Horwitz, 2012).

There is an epistemological problem with the First Amendment as it starts with freedom of expression; there is a conflicting relationship between free speech and truth, fact and opinion (Horwitz, 2012). Truth, if left to its own devices, will triumph, but in the political world, there is no clear line between the truth and opinion (Gibbons, 2009). Politicians blur the line of truth to align with their narratives (Gibbons, 2009). False speech is protected in the United States; in *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, Justice Brennan wrote even false statements can be a valuable contributor to the public debate (Horwitz, 2012). Academic freedom is another issue tied to the epistemological problem (Horwitz, 2012). In *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, Chief Justice Warren said academic freedom is vital to allow for new discoveries (Horwitz, 2012). Over the years, the courts have moved away from academic freedom toward the concept of a “marketplace of ideas” (Horwitz, 2012, p. 448).

Politicians have a positional bias that affects their epistemology (Takaca, 2002). Who one is in life and where one stands with others affects and shapes one’s point-of-view (Takaca, 2002). It is tough for people to see outside their perspectives to identify universal truths; instead, they egocentrically embrace ideas crafted by their personal and unique experiences in life and the world (Takaca, 2002). Being able to connect positionality to epistemology both empowers and disempowers individual expertise, which can be hard for politicians to understand (Stout & Stanton, 2011). Only by truly listening to others can politicians realize different points of view and the possible narrow

range of knowledge politicians and superintendents have on a certain topic or subject (Gibbons, 2009).

Positional bias is difficult to detect and tough to deeply examine; many people in a position of power have never been challenged on their ideas (Harrison, 2006). Notions politicians believe, are true to them; even with the ability to examine truth or other points of view, making an educated decision may be difficult (Takaca, 2002). Political authority and the truth are very hard to quantify; humans are diverse and complex, and hypotheses are not always easy to prove (Harrison, 2006).

For this study, the primary investigator interviewed leaders of the political parties of Missouri and school administrators to gain insight into the motivations and political views which drive decision making at the state and local levels. Solberg (2012) argued interviews are a joint effort to create knowledge. According to Jansen (2015), “Qualitative research interviews constitute specific contexts for creating and telling stories” (p. 27). Bolman and Deal’s (2015) political frame views a world of competing interests in which “conflict is a central process, and power is the critical source” (p. 38). An investigation of whether perceptions align regarding federal mandates may lend insight into this conflict for Missouri school leaders. Lyon et al. (2014) stated this is important as schools experience decreased funding. According to MTBI Basics, “Given the different personality types and operational styles of any school’s stakeholders, the consensus around how to achieve curriculum improvement, or whether improvement is even necessary, remains an ongoing discussion” (as cited in Lyon et al., 2014, p. 43).

Continuous School Improvement

School leaders are looking for continuous school improvement; without this drive for improvement, there is no reason to think students will have the chance to improve from year to year (Fox, 2014). Leaders seek an accountability system which examines all aspects of school policy, reveals root causes of underperformance, and examines the associations between the strategies implemented and the results they realize or fail to realize (Elgart, 2016). For continuous school improvement, schools must first make sense of the data generated from performance-based accountability measures (Beaver & Weinbaum, 2015). According to Bernhardt (2015):

More recently, we've come to the realization that we must focus on improvement strategies that will have a positive effect on *all* students and teachers. To do this, schools must gather and analyze data that will help them understand where they are now as a system; why they're getting the results they're getting; and, if they're not happy with current results, how to get better results for everyone. (p. 56)

History has shown most generally reforms tend to focus marginally at best on teaching and learning improvement; reforms focus on accountability, but not on improvement (Honig & Rainey, 2012). Argon (2015) asserted, "Accountability in the field of education which serves the development of learning, teaching, and educational methods requires one to claim responsibility for the achievement or failure resulting from current practices" (p. 926). A lack of appropriate resources married with the ineffective and inappropriate use of existing resources results in the topic of continuous school improvement being always at the forefront of conversation (Argon, 2015).

Education is complex, contexts matter, and because of this complexity, understanding and predicting what works in one area makes it very problematic to realize what may work in another part of the United States or worldwide (Berliner & Glass, 2015). Nearly all school personnel, parents, and students know there is a considerable variability among teachers; however, the politics of distraction are often invoked to avoid asking difficult questions (Hattie, 2015). The U.S. reform strategy has been to make better standards, assessments, monitoring, interventions, and development (Fullan, 2011).

Physical and financial resources pale in comparison to the importance of human resources; much more time and energy needs to be spent on the human element and developing a culture (Gurr, 2014). It is hard for teachers to believe in the new improvements if they do not believe in their leaders (Gurr, 2014). Argon (2015) found teachers and administrators assign like meanings for accountability and believe everyone employed in a school system should be held accountable. Argon (2015) noted:

They also believe that school principals should not only be accountable to their superiors but that the first and foremost rationale for accountability comes from the requirement of principals to undertake their responsibilities properly and in line with the law. (p. 925)

Fox (2014) asked four essential questions for continuous improvement:

1. Based on the evidence, what will I continue to do (Fox, 2014)? Similarly, Gurr (2014) asked if teachers continue to do what they are doing because they are happy and comfortable, or if the evidence suggests doing something different.

2. Based on the evidence, what will I continue to do, but do more consistently and more efficiently (Fox, 2014)? Gurr (2014) likewise asked what to do if evidence is

not great, but adequate. Although the researcher might be on the right track, solid adjustments should be identified that are necessary to improve (Gurr, 2014).

3. Based on the evidence, what will I begin to do that I have not done before (Fox, 2014)? According to Gurr (2014), teachers and administrators realize strategies are ineffective and need to try something new.

4. Based on the evidence, what will I stop doing (Fox, 2014)? Gurr (2014) stated educators must identify strategies that do not work and eliminate them. Pinpointing ineffective policy is hard for some to do because teachers are partial to certain strategies (Gurr, 2014).

Chenoweth (2015) identified five practices that typically yield improvement:

1. Have a laser-like focus on what kids need to learn.
2. Collaborate on how to teach content by unpacking standards, mapping curriculum, designing lessons, and constructing assessments that can measure student mastery.
3. Use the results of classroom and district formative assessments to see which kids got it, and need enrichment, and which ones did not and may require additional help.
4. Find patterns in data and use them to improve instruction (My students have not learned as many sight words as yours. What have you done differently than what I did?).
5. Build personal relationships so that students trust teachers and so that parents, teachers, and administrators trust one another. (p. 17)

Argon (2015) added stakeholders believe school administrator assignments should be based on individual characteristics with liability prioritized “as important criteria to ensure the employment of administrators who act with accountability in the education system” (p. 925).

A ‘wrong driver’ could be chosen in continuous improvement; selecting the wrong driver has a minimal chance of achieving the desired outcome, while a ‘right driver’ is one which ends up achieving better measurable results for students (Fullan, 2011). Attention must be paid to how schools make sense of the data mined and provided by the states (Beaver & Weinbaum, 2015). In the evolving world of U.S. education, potential improvement rests on how well an idea or movement can thrive and survive (Glazer & Peurach, 2012). Some improvement ideas are simple, like expressing high(er) expectations through higher-order, engaging pedagogies (Gorski, 2013). All too often, educators lack the knowledge and skills (training) to interpret student performance data (Beaver & Weinbaum, 2015). Ooghe and Schokkaert (2016) noted:

School accountability schemes require measures of school performance, and these measures are in practice often based on pupil test scores. It is well known that insufficiently correcting these test scores for pupil characteristics may provide incentives for pupil selection. Building further on results from the theory of fair allocation, we show that the trade-off between reward and pupil selection is not only a matter of sufficient information. A school accountability scheme that rewards school performance will create incentives for pupil selection, even under perfect information, unless the educational production function satisfies an (unrealistic) separability assumption. (p. 359)

Teachers need to work in and be evaluated on teams; the evaluation system needs to have minimal consequences based on student test scores but should include multiple classroom observations and an evaluation of classroom artifacts (Berliner & Glass, 2015).

Beginning History of Federal Government in Public Education

The right to a free education is not in the federal constitution, but rather in state constitutions; every state has an “education article” that guarantees a free public education (Board, 2012). For much of the history of the United States, education has been a local matter (Asen, 2012). The federal government first got involved in education in 1867, when it established the U.S. Department of Education (Chopin, 2013). In the beginning, the agency was created to collect data on best practices to pass the information on to teachers. Originally the agency was in the executive branch (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

The original Morrill Act of 1862 gave an opportunity to people who would not have originally had the chance to go to college. The Second Morrill Act in 1890 gave the Office of Education the authority to allow freedmen and women from the South the opportunity to go to college (Brooks & Marcus, 2015). During World War II, more expansion of federal support for education occurred.

Many communities were affected by the presence of military bases and other installations, as the Lanham Act in 1941 and the Impact Aid laws of 1950 provided payments for districts impacted by military bases (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In 1958, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) was passed by Congress in response to the Sputnik launch of the Soviet Union. Low-cost student loans were initiated to help bridge the perceived education gap between the brightest from the Soviet

Union and the United States (Maher, 2016). The federal constitution does not speak of education; it does not even explicitly give the U.S. Congress the right to legislate on the subject (Board, 2012).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

In 1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) into law (Cross, 2010). The law was passed as part of the “War on Poverty,” and emphasized equal access to education with high standards and accountability (Cross, 2010). Johnson was a former teacher on the Texas border who believed all children had the right to an equal education (Ladson-Billings, 2015). The ESEA was about opportunity for all children (Asen, 2012). Johnson was never fully able to accomplish his goal of closing the achievement gap; billions of dollars have been spent to close the gap, but still today many children from low-income families struggle with a poor-quality public education (Zelizer, 2015). Since 1960, the difference between the standardized test scores of lower-income families and higher-income families has increased by 40% (Jennings, 2015).

This Act was the first, extensive foray into public education, with the most significant provision being Title I (Miller, 2014). Overcrowding classrooms, poor teacher pay, increased dropouts and a decrease in quality instruction led Lyndon B. Johnson (as cited in the Congressional Record, 2007) to say in his memoirs:

“There is an old saying that kids is where the money ain’t. And I need to repeat that. That may be true today, Madam Speaker. That kids is where the money ain’t, which summed up one of the major problems confronting the American educational system when I become President. Because of these convictions, I

made a personal decision during the 1964 Presidential campaign to make education a fundamental issue and to put it high on the Nation's agenda.

I proposed to act on my belief that, regardless of a family's financial condition, education should be available to every child in the United States, as much education as he or she could absorb. I had no intention of walking away from this fight." (p. 5428)

In the beginning, the ESEA was envisioned to help low-income children, but the reality is that the ESEA reflects political wrangling and deal-making (Ladson-Billings 2015).

President Johnson had troubles passing the ESEA; Republicans usually supported block grants, while Democrats approved federal appropriations based on determined categories (Geier, 2014). Education to Johnson was a two-tier educational system; resources existed in the country, but not everyone was able to access these resources (Asen, 2012). Johnson believed children enter school as blank slates, and children should be able to get as much education as they can handle (Miller, 2014). The architect of the ESEA was the U.S. Commissioner of Education, Francis Keppel (Hanna, 2005). Up until 1965, the federal government had minimally been involved in public education, but the ESEA changed that (Jennings, 2015).

Once the ESEA was signed into law, the federal government got involved in the day-to-day operation of public schools (Jennings, 2015). Since the signing of the law, the federal government's involvement in education has increased dramatically; Head Start and Title I are direct descendants of the ESEA (Hanna, 2005). The ESEA has put an exorbitant amount of money into helping low-income families, but the achievement gap

has not closed for low-income students (Ladson-Billings, 2015). The ESEA was to be reviewed every four or five years by Congress (Jennings, 2015).

Title I gave federal funding for poor children, and to this day Title I is still in the public school system (Zelizer, 2015). The ESEA Title I provisions gave a significant amount of money to meet the needs of children who were considered “educationally deprived” (Ladson-Billings, 2015, p. 99). To qualify for Title I, 3% or at least 100 students in a district, must be considered low-income (Asen, 2012). Ladson-Billings (2015) described Section 201 of ESEA:

In recognition of the special educational needs of low-income families and the impact that concentrations of low-income families have on the ability of local educational agencies to support adequate educational programs, the Congress hereby declares it to be the policy of the United States to provide financial assistance . . . to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs by various means (including preschool programs) which contribute to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children. (p. 99)

Ladson-Billings (2015) further explained the positive the ESEA accomplished by mitigating disparities which exist between poor children and their middle-class peers.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

The NCLB Act was the reauthorization of a law originally signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 (Krebs, 2015). The NCLB Act replaced the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Peet & Vercelletto, 2016). With strong bipartisan support, the NCLB Act was designed to give equal educational opportunities

for all students to obtain a quality education (Chopin, 2013). The NCLB Act was a market-oriented approach to solving the education problem (Golann, 2015). Within the NCLB Act, policymakers established a new set of regulations in which the pressure was not only on state and local educational systems but of individual schools to improve and take responsibility (Glazer & Peurach, 2012).

The NCLB Act had a new concept in its provisions, with mandates and ties between funding and performance (Chopin, 2013). Schools were held responsible for student test scores with NCLB (Golann, 2015). The degree of intervention into the educational process by the federal government was considered by many to be a reach too far by the national government (Grissom & Herrington, 2012). Duties enacted by the NCLB included state-wide testing, challenging standards, and a requirement schools hire “highly qualified” teachers (Chopin, 2013, p. 415).

Since the adoption of NCLB, overwhelming data have been available for schools to analyze to develop ways to reform (Beaver & Weinbaum, 2015). Fullan (2011) stated, “Reform strategy is to drive reform by better standards, assessment, monitoring, intervention and development” (p. 14). To meet the provisions of NCLB, states had to create new systems to track student progress, provide parent choice, and create new plans for taking over failing schools (Grissom & Herrington, 2012).

The George W. Bush Administration wanted to place greater emphasis on teacher subject matter and to focus less on educational coursework (Lewis & Young, 2013). Since the adoption of NCLB, there have been many efforts to study how schools operate in the new world of performance-based accountability systems (Beaver & Weinbaum, 2015). Bernhardt (2015) stated:

Unfortunately, the way many learning organizations in the United States got serious was to look at their high-stakes student achievement results and focus their plans on the lowest-scoring subject area or subgroups of students or the bubble kids. (p. 56)

The intent of NCLB was to improve academic opportunity for students yet states found it difficult to make accountability standards (Beaver & Weinbaum, 2015).

Problems with NCLB. The demise of NCLB was because of tight restrictions placed on schools; ironically, this type of legislation was the first of its kind to place tight restrictions on schools (Chopin, 2013). The divide between political views has been so great in the United States that citizens and politicians cannot agree upon the best way to reform education (Bushaw & Lopez, 2012). Researchers have identified practices that lead to improvement in schools, but getting everyone on the same page is difficult in today's politically charged world (Chenoweth, 2015). With the economic downturn during the late 2000s, school curriculum focused on academic basics because it was simple, inexpensive, and easy-to-grade with multiple-choice answers (Tanner, 2013).

The NCLB Act did not allow flexibility equally across the states (Grissom & Herrington, 2012). Within NCLB, teachers were required to be highly qualified to teach in their respective subjects; however, each state was able to identify what highly qualified meant to them, so in reality, the policy was noble but changed teacher quality little (Lewis & Young, 2013). Hattie (2015) stated one of the five politics of distraction in schools is having more tests. Schools that get Title I funding and fail to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two

consecutive years are deemed “in need of improvement” (Bogin & Nguyen-Hoang, 2014, p. 788). The NCLB Act put pressure on schools with unattainable goals; many schools were then labeled as “needs improvement” (Chopin, 2013, p. 423).

Waivers have been allowed, but problems with these waivers have arisen; most states applied for waivers because they could not meet the NCLB standards (McNeil, 2013). States wanted to relieve pressure and meet the NCLB goals; therefore, the school boards were faced with four options (Chopin, 2013):

1. strive in vain to reach the unattainable goal,
2. lower their adequate yearly progress goals so that they may be achieved and hope that NCLB is reauthorized before the 2014 goal,
3. decline the funding attached to NCLB and thus avoid the regulations, or
4. make assessments easier or lower the cut-off score needed to be deemed “proficient.” (p. 423)

Schools with the “failing” designation had unintended consequences; home prices fell and neighborhoods deteriorated because of the lack of interest parents had in moving their families into these school districts (Bogin & Nguyen-Hoang, 2014). Schools have been forced to teach to the test to make AYP, to avoid being labeled as failing (Tanner, 2013).

Charter Schools

In 2014, the Detroit Free Press reported Michigan was spending \$1 billion per year on failed charter schools (Diaz, 2016). Diaz (2016) asserted, with the economic and education crises many districts encounter and the increased pervasiveness of charter

schools, “students with special education needs may be at risk due to the increased cost of adequately educating students with special needs” (p. 27). Still yet, parents for various reasons, including increased dissatisfaction with public schools, are choosing to place their children in charter schools (Diaz, 2016).

The number of charter schools has grown dramatically over the past two decades (Roch & Na, 2015). Minnesota was the first state to adopt a charter school law in 1991; as of 2013, over 600 charter schools have been established in 41 states, serving 4-5% of the public-school student population (Roch & Na, 2015). Charter schools have increased in numbers and popularity because of the rise of interest groups and educational activists involved in the finance or business of schools (Reckhow, Grossmann, & Evans, 2015).

A charter school is defined as a school that “combines public funding with private management” (Jha & Buckingham, 2015, p. 52). Charter schools are publically funded, but they do not fall under the same state government regulations and guidelines public schools do (Reckhow et al., 2015). In the beginning, charter schools were supposed to be for all stakeholders in the community to address the needs of children (Richardson, 2017). The charter school movement has taken a different turn over the past few years with management organizations that oversee many charter schools helping to control the costs of educating students (Bausell, 2016).

Charter schools are mainly in urban areas of the United States (Raam, 2016). Charter schools have been a way to turn around schools that have been failing for many years (Jha & Buckingham, 2015). In these failing schools, the traditional mode of education has not been working for some time (Jha & Buckingham, 2015). Over the past few years, there has been a growing concern for the operation of charter schools; the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has opposed charter schools and released a 2016 resolution calling for a moratorium on expansion of charter schools (Richardson, 2017). The NAACP is calling for a moratorium on the expansion of charter schools at least until:

- Charter schools are subject to the same transparency and accountability standards as public schools.
- Public funds are not diverted to charter schools at the expense of the public-school system.
- Charter schools cease expelling students that public schools have a duty to educate.
- Charter schools cease to perpetuate de facto segregation of the highest performing children from those whose aspirations may be high but whose talents are not yet as obvious. (Richardson, 2017, p. 42)

These problems are not just realized by the NAACP, but also by public school administrators (Vasquez Heilig, Holme, LeClair, Redd, & Ward, 2016).

Charter schools were started as a laboratory for experimentation in education in the most challenging areas of the country (Palardy, Nesbit, & Adzima, 2015). Public schools are starting to become a big business for corporations; in 2014, Pearson, which owns the Connections Academy, earned over \$948 million in revenue (Bausell, 2016). The business of schooling to some has turned into a money grab and not a process to educate the nation's children (Raam, 2016). The big debate now is whether corporations or companies can educate children better than public schools while making money for the company or stockholders (Casey, 2015).

The effectiveness of charter schools has been studied over the years, with Palardy et al. (2015) studying Arizona charter schools' effectiveness in 2001. Palardy et al. (2015) found:

Although the results are still somewhat mixed, there is some evidence that traditional public schools have improved in response to charter schools and, in some cases, the performance of charter schools has even outpaced that of public schools. However, it is unclear whether this improved performance is attributed to an increase in resources or a more efficient use of resources overall. (p. 279)

Charter schools do not have limits set on them which unions require of public schools (Jha & Buckingham, 2015). Charter schools can recruit highly motivated teachers who want to negotiate salaries based on hours and test scores (Jha & Buckingham, 2015).

Charter schools are conducted as for-profit businesses, making students with high needs a problem, as high-needs students are naturally more expensive to educate (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). The incentive for charter schools is to make money, which leads to recruiting easier-to-service clientele (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). This notion is consistent with the theory charter schools recruit students they know will make money (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2016). Easier-to-educate students should result in superior academic outcomes, but data are mixed at best (Roch & Na, 2015).

Bill Gates has given millions of dollars to start and sustain charter schools in Washington, and in the beginning, there was heavy support for the initiative (Raam, 2016). Over time, mixed academic results have caused constituents in Washington to ease up on the idea of charter schools (Raam, 2016). Charter schools in Washington have

not been proven to provide a better education than public schools; some charter schools do a better job than public schools, yet some do not (Raam, 2016).

In the end, the leadership of schools, stakeholder involvement, and the quality of teachers determines a charter school's success; these three factors also make public schools a success (Richardson, 2017). The evidence is mixed at best on charter schools, with both sides providing data to support their positions (Casey, 2015). With big business and big money involved in the charter school business, charter schools are not going to go away (Reckhow et al., 2015).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

From the establishment of the U.S. Department of Education to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) President Obama signed into law on December 10, 2015, the government continues to attempt school reform (Peet & Vercelletto, 2016). The ESSA is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a federal law originally signed into law in 1965 and last reauthorized as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002 (Krebs, 2015). The ESSA gives more decision-making power back to states and local districts when dealing with school improvement, rather than the one-size-fits-all solutions set forth by NCLB (Whitehouse, 2016). States still have to submit accountability plans to the Department of Education, but states are allowed to pick their goals and smaller interim objectives ("The Every Student Succeeds Act: Explained," 2015). Former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated, "Encouraging districts and states to move away from traditional textbooks and toward freely accessible, openly licensed materials" is a goal of the ESSA (Cavanagh, 2016).

President Obama's Race to the Top was rooted in the work of two former Presidents, George H. W. Bush in his manifesto America 2000 and George W. Bush in the NCLB Act (Tanner, 2013). The Race to the Top tied further nationalized high-stakes testing to teacher accountability and school finance (Tanner, 2013). A fundamental problem with NCLB was the fact that by imposing a punitive system to reform schools, the law assumed schools have the knowledge to educate all students but simply refuse to do it (Chopin, 2013). The big step in reversing NCLB was identifying the problem goes deeper than an unwillingness to educate, and a more fundamental change needs to be made to the entire system (Chopin, 2013). The question now facing educators is not "What works?" but "How do we get there from there?" (Chenoweth, 2015).

Missouri Issues

Failing schools. The Missouri educational system has not been without controversy. Missouri adopted a student-transfer law that caused three districts to be pushed near the edge of bankruptcy (Maxwell, 2014). The three school districts, Normandy School District, Riverview Gardens School District, and the Kansas City Public School District were designated as unaccredited in December 2013 (Hubbard, 2014). The transfer law was supposed to be a solution for segregated school problems St. Louis and Kansas City had faced for decades (Goral, 2015b).

Missouri's history is littered with examples of school segregation (Taylor, 2013). In 1976, the state constitution mandated that separation of children be illegal (Taylor, 2013). It remains difficult for St. Louis and Kansas City schools to integrate with the white-flight which has occurred over the last 60 years (Hoemer, 2015). In *Turner vs. School District of Clayton*, the Missouri Supreme Court allowed students from an

unaccredited school to transfer to an accredited school, and the unaccredited school district had to pay tuition and transportation for the students to and from the unaccredited district (Taylor, 2013). In this case, the Turner family, residents of the St. Louis Public School District (SLPS), sent children to Clayton School (Hubbard, 2014). While the Turner family was paying tuition for their children to go to Clayton School District, SLPS became unaccredited (Hubbard, 2014). For this reason, the Turner family believed that SLPS should pay the tuition cost for their children to continue their education in Clayton (Hubbard, 2014). The trial court and the court of appeals ruled the transfer rule did not apply to the Turners because they were already sending their children to the Clayton School District when the SPLS district was designated as unaccredited (Hubbard, 2014).

The Turner case made it to the Missouri Supreme Court, but under the *Breitenfeld vs. School District of Clayton*, the Missouri Supreme Court did not agree with the lower courts and decided SLPS be required to pay the students' tuition (Hoemer, 2015). That decision, known as the Unaccredited District Tuition Statue (UDTS), required Normandy to pay tuition expenses for all students who wanted to go to an accredited school district (Goral, 2015). As a result, these payments crippled the Normandy school (Goral 2015). The UDTS had unexpected ramifications across the state of Missouri and left Normandy on the verge of collapse with massive tuition payments (Maxwell, 2014). Neighboring school districts (i.e., Frances Howell) took in 475 students, which comprised the largest portion of Normandy students of any school district (Taylor, 2013). Normandy had to pay for over 1,000 students to attend another school district which cost the district over \$15 million dollars (Taylor, 2013). In February of 2014, the State Board of Education

took over the economic realm of the Normandy school district (Hoemer, 2015).

Normandy was given distinction by the state of “credited with state oversight” which meant students could no longer leave the unaccredited district for an accredited district (Hubbard, 2014).

Preschool Education

At the beginning of the 20th century, Maria Montessori, a female doctor in Rome, discovered observing children in a free environment allows educators to find the children’s true potential (Bärbieru, 2016). The Montessori educator is prepared on different levels to attend to the needs of children (see Figure 1). More recently, President Ronald Reagan’s 1983 National Commission on Excellence published *A Nation at Risk*, which noted the breakdown in child-centered education (Moyer, 2017).

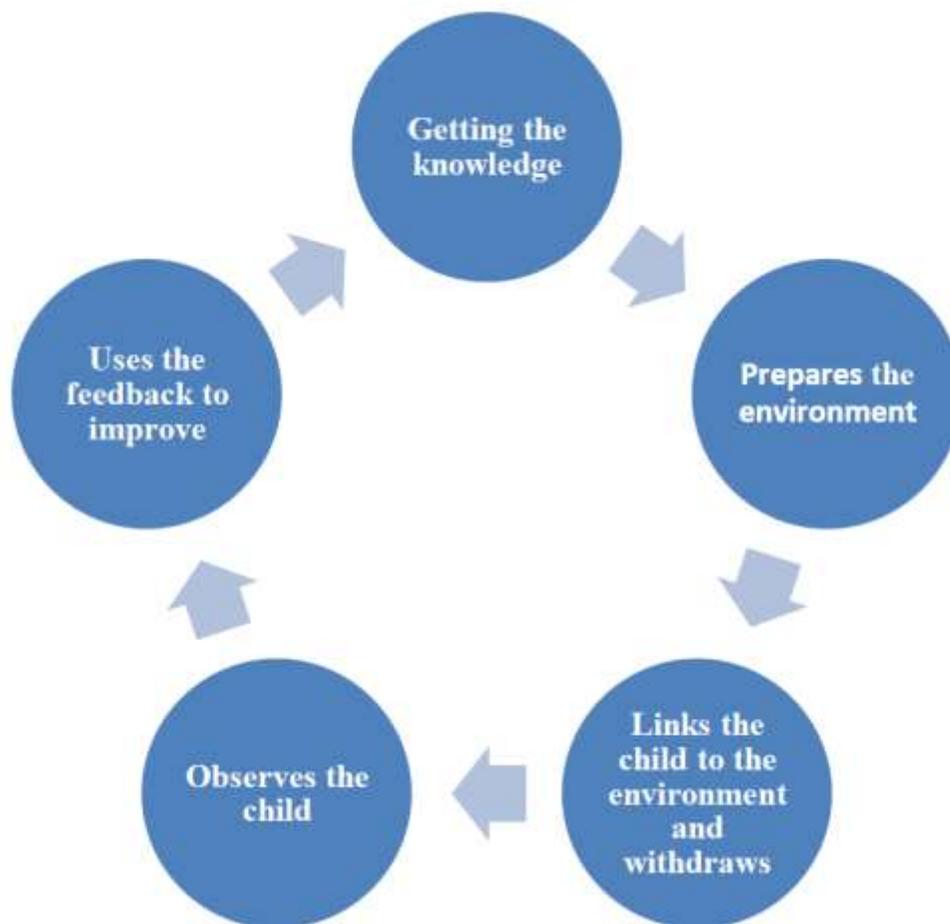


Figure 1. Roles of the Montessori educator. Adapted from “The Role of the Educator in a Montessori Classroom,” by I. C. Bărbieru, 2016, *Romanian Journal for Multidimensional Education / Revista Romaneasca Pentru Educatie Multidimensionala*, 8(1), p. 119.

Currently, policymakers seem to recognize the foundational importance of a quality early childhood, or preschool, education for young children (Moyer, 2017). According to Moyer (2017), “In 2013 President Barack Obama unveiled a plan to provide universal preschool to all low- and moderate-income four-year-olds across the country, citing it as a way to narrow the vast achievement gap that persists between wealthy and

poor kids” (p. 26). Forty-one states and the District of Columbia now fund voluntary preschool (Poppe & Lipkowitz, 2015). Nonetheless, only 18% of low-income children are currently receiving a high-quality preschool education, according to the U.S. Department of Education (Moyer, 2017). Of those who do attend preschool, there is a vast difference between child-centered curriculum and programmed or boxed curriculum, which has proven to be less effective (Moyer, 2017). Poppe and Lipkowitz (2015) established, “An estimated 52 percent of low-income kids and 25 percent of moderate- or high-income kids arrive on the first day of kindergarten unprepared, lacking in many of the skills considered essential to learning” (p. 15).

High-quality preschool education can make an impressive return on initial investment (District Administration, 2016). According to the Education Commission of the States, preschool funding was increased in 2015-2016 for the fourth straight year except for the states Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Hampshire, and Florida, which saw a decrease in state funding (District Administration, 2016) (see Figure 2). Some argue the country needs to invest in a more readily trained preschool workforce and put aside the high-priced curricula for developmentally appropriate practice (Moyer, 2017).



*Figure 2. 2015-2016 pre-K Funding. Adapted from “State of the States: Preschool Funding Keeps Growing,” by Education Commission of the States, 2016, *District Administration*, 52(4), 23.*

Preschool teachers have a serious goal to prepare children for future academic success (Poppe & Lipkowitz, 2015). Not all preschools are evaluated with praise (Christakis, 2016). According to Poppe and Lipkowitz (2015), “Along with concerns over the disparities in achievement, however, come concerns over parental rights, big government and a growing ‘nanny state’” (p. 15). Traditional preschools consider the child the object in education who passively absorbs information (Bärbieru, 2016). Rather than focusing on the developmentally appropriate suggestions of Piaget or Montessori, for some:

... much greater portions of the day are now spent on “seat work” (a term that probably doesn’t need any exposition) and a form of tightly scripted teaching

known as direct instruction, formerly used mainly in the older grades, in which a teacher carefully controls the content and pacing of what a child is supposed to learn. (Christakis, 2016, p. 17)

Experts argue less time on worksheets and formal writing and more focus on vital, spontaneous, unstructured conversation improves children's understanding (Christakis, 2016).

Finland's educational system may lend inspiration to what true early childhood education should resemble (Christakis, 2016). Christakis (2016) noted, "Having rejected many of the pseudo-academic benchmarks that can, and do, fit on a scorecard, preschool teachers in Finland are free to focus on what is essential: their relationship with the growing child" (p. 20). Finns do not begin formal reading instruction until age seven and focus on the very basics of literacy, speaking, and listening (Christakis, 2016). Training educators in child psychology and having a clear understanding of stages of development can lead to a better way of understanding and discovering the child (Bärbieter, 2016).

While skeptics of preschool believe the effects end by third grade, James Heckman, a Nobel laureate economist at the University of Chicago, asserted preschool education just makes sense (Poppe & Lipkowitz, 2015). In fact, two new studies examining the long-term impact of early childhood education revealed it makes a positive impact on adult outcomes (Samuels, 2016). The researchers found participating in early childhood education increased a person's likelihood of "graduating high school, pursuing post-high school education, and completing a post-high-school program, which might

include a certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's degree" (Samuels, 2016, p. 15). The key seems to be distinguishing high-quality programs from those which are presumably not high-quality (Armor, 2015).

Beginning of Political Parties in The United States

The interrelationship between education and politics is evident, though seldom noted in the literature (Straume, 2016). According to Straume (2016), "Most of the time, the political system is taken as a given, and education conceptualized as an instrument for stability and social integration" (p. 29). John Dewey's 1916 work, *Democracy and Education*, presented the notion of collaborative, open discourse among groups for the betterment of society (Straume, 2016). Political theorist Amy Gutmann (as cited in Straume, 2016) wrote *Democratic Education*, in which she warned the access to influence education must be limited to avoid destroying the foundations of democracy. To fully understand the modern-day influence on the political influence on public education, the primary investigator presents literature about the development of parties within the United States.

European influence. The idea of political parties did not develop until the late 1600s; ancient Greeks had no organized political parties (Flanders, 2007). In Roman times, Patricians represented the noble families, and the Plebeians represented the middle class; there was no representation of the lower class (Flanders, 2007). During the late 1600s, political parties started to develop in England as the Whigs and Tory developed in response to a plot to kill King Charles, II by the Roman Catholics (Prochaska, 2012).

The king's supporters were called Tories, and the term Whig was assigned to people who were opposed to the government (Prochaska, 2012). The pedagogical values

inherent in ancient Greek education utilized the processes of Socrates and Descartes, which are still evident in some philosophical and didactic frameworks in modern education (Cashmore, 2015). While the politics and educational philosophies of ancient Greece traverse across time, Cashmore (2015) argued:

In past philosophical traditions, dynamic growth, free questioning, and social responsibility are considered essential to the practice of philosophy. Certain factors in today's educational institutions limit students' abilities to achieve those values, although the appeal to these values is the same. (p. 145)

American roots. The first indication of political parties in the United States was the Federalist party which supported the U.S. Constitution and the Anti-Federalists who opposed it (Hendricks, 2017). According to Neem (2016):

In the decades between the American Revolution and the Civil War, American voters developed publicly funded and publicly run school systems. This would have been impossible to conceive in 1776 when states lacked the taxing and institutional capacity to run complex institutions. (p. 48)

Historians believe early schools expanded after the Revolutionary War in response to external contexts (Neem, 2016).

Republican party roots are traced to 1792, when followers of Thomas Jefferson, who adopted the moniker *Republican*, believed in a decentralized central government (Britannica.org, 2016b). Thomas Jefferson's philosophy is the same as most modern day Republicans (Britannica.org, 2016b). In the United States, the election of 1796 was the first time people began to contend for office as members of an organized political party (USHistory.org, 2016). From the beginning, political parties suffer in reputation as when

George Washington warned against “the baneful effects of the spirit of the spirit of party” (USHistory.org, 2016, para 1). James Madison was one of the first to see the value of the political party, but he thought the parties would only be temporary to achieve a specific goal (Bryce, 2017). By 1796, two political parties emerged in the nation (Hendricks, 2017). The Federalists supported a strong national government, and Republicans supported state sovereignty (Hendricks, 2017). The Federalist Party disappeared shortly after the beginning of the 1800s with the death of Alexander Hamilton and the lack of a dynamic leader (Bryce, 2017).

By the 1820s the Republicans started to separate into Adams Republicans and Jackson Democrats (Britannica.com, 2017). In 1828, Andrew Jackson was elected president; he was a Democrat-Republican (USHistory.org, 2016). By 1832, the Jackson Democrats were simply known as Democrats, and Andrew Jackson easily won reelection (Berg-Andersson, 2001). This period was the beginning of what is known today as the Democratic Party, the Jackson followers (Britannica, 2016a).

People who opposed Jackson and were once Federalists joined to form the Whig Party (USHistory.org, 2016). The Democrats dominated the presidential elections from 1828 to 1856, winning all but two presidential elections (Britannica.com, 2016a). A fracture was developing in the Democratic Party, and the issue of slavery commenced as a major problem (Britannica.com, 2016a). By the mid-1850s, slavery was the major contention in the political debate and overshadowed all other matters (Prochaska, 2012). The primary division regarding slavery was states’ rights (Bryce, 2017). The debate separated parties, and the Whig Party was fragmented by the issue (Bryce, 2017).

The Democrats also had their problems with Northern and Southern Democrats embracing differing opinions on slavery (Flanders, 2007). Southern Democrats favored states' rights, which would allow slavery and believed the states could secede (Berg-Andersson 2001). The antislavery forces and Free Soil forces joined up in Buffalo, New York, during 1854 where they established the Republican Party (Flanders, 2007). By 1861, the Republican Party captured the White House with the election of Abraham Lincoln (Bryce, 2017).

The Early-American roots of education during the early 1800s was male-oriented with females receiving training to be feminine in preparation for becoming a wife and a mother (West, 2016). American girls from the 1830s and 1840s:

. . . were expected to take on the attributes of “true womanhood” during their teenage years. These attributes included “piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.” Women who possessed these characteristics were held up as the perfect wives and mothers and touted as the salvation of the American republic.

The religious and social leaders from this period generally felt that the qualities associated with true womanhood were best cultivated in the home and the church, not the school. (West, 2016, p. 228)

Before the 20th century, women may have possessed little power or authority, but in the late 1800s education was an area in which they began to exercise both (Jacobs, Leach, & Spencer, 2013). Proponents of education during this time-frame believed there was no purpose in preparing females educationally beyond this point other than to bear and raise children (West, 2016).

Politics of the late 1800s brought changes both to the role of education and to politics (West, 2016). The election of 1860 is regarded as one of three “critical” elections and was influential in changing the political path of the United States (Britannica.com, 2016b). With the abolition of slavery and the election of President Abraham Lincoln, who was a Republican, yet unrelated to Thomas Jefferson and the old Republican Party, the Democrats were weakened (Britannica.com, 2016b). The split in the Democratic Party resulted in the election of Abraham Lincoln who was elected president with only 40% of the popular vote (Britannica.com, 2016a).

The Southern Democrat nominee, John C. Breckinridge, received 18% of the vote, and Northern Democrat nominee, Stephen A. Douglas, received 29% (Britannica.com, 2016a). During this time, the Republicans were the favored party of business and high tariffs, while the Democrats drew in farmers and the mass influx of immigrants (Hendricks, 2017). Democrats tolerated slavery and opposed civil rights reform to retain the support of many Southern voters, but the split cost the Democrats the 1860 election (Britannica.com, 2017a).

The two major parties were not very divided until the 1930s; this was the time of the Great Depression (Flanders, 2007). The election of Franklin D. Roosevelt as the President of the United States deepened the divide; the New Deal was a large federal government program which Republicans opposed (Britannica.com, 2016a). The Republicans fought against government interference with business during the Great Depression and espoused the federal government was taking too much power and leading the nation to a welfare state (Prochaska, 2012). Republicans were relegated to a minority party during the Great Depression and were kept out of the White House for over two

decades with the leadership of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman (McNay, 2016). McNay (2016) noted, “Herbert Hoover’s ponderous logic, dour demeanor, and ideological constraints, simply could not match Franklin D. Roosevelt’s vigorous delivery, optimism, and openness to experimentation” (p. 209). McNay continued:

Despite the vast amount of literature about Roosevelt and his administration, there always seems to be something enigmatic and hard to encompass about the charismatic and longest-serving president. By contrast, the modest and straightforward Harry S. Truman looms large as an individual in the Margolies volume devoted to scholarly work on his presidency. (p. 209)

The Republicans were kept at bay during the 1950s with the combination of World War II and the anticommunist rhetoric promoted by Joseph McCarthy (Burgess, 2017). Burgess (2017) stated, “In the mid-1950s, Sen. Joseph McCarthy (1908-57) made a name for himself through a combination of self-promotion and accusations of communist subversion within the U.S. government” (p. 100). Although columnists at the time chastised Eisenhower for not confronting the senator, Dwight Eisenhower, the commander of the United States Allied forces during World War II, easily won election and reelection in 1952 and 1956 for the Republicans (Burgess, 2017).

On the education realm, one of the first lawsuits filed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) came in 1951 when a 16-year-old Barbara Johnson picketed for an integrated school in Virginia (Turner, 2015). Turner (2015) reported:

[In 1954] . . .the United States Supreme Court issued its seminal decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Interpreting and applying the Equal Protection

Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, a unanimous Court held “that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” In so holding, the Court determined that it could “not turn the clock back to 1868 when the Amendment was adopted, or even to 1896 when *Plessy v. Ferguson* was written.” The Court chose, instead, to “consider public education in the light of its full development and its present place in American life throughout the Nation.” (p. 1143)

These epic human rights events coincided with battles against gender oppression and opportunities for courses of study, and intellectual development was also expanded to females (Vinovskis, 2015).

The Democrats won the presidency in 1960 with John F. Kennedy and an election signaling in the civil rights era (Gunmzburger, 2017). The Democratic Party was split with the civil rights legislation, and once President Kennedy was assassinated, Lyndon B. Johnson served as a one-term president principally because of the opposition to the Vietnam War (Farrell, 2017). Richard M. Nixon vehemently denied any role in sabotaging Johnson’s 1968 peach initiative and was captured saying, “My God. I would never do anything to encourage South Vietnam not to come to the table” (as cited in Farrell, 2016, para 1).

Throughout the 1970s, both the Democrats and Republican held the office of the President (Klimasewski, Patolo, & Tsikalas, 2015). During the 1980s, Ronald Regan was elected with Vice President, George H.W. Bush, following President Regan’s term as

president (Klimasewski, Patolo, & Tsikalas, 2015). A relatively unknown Democrat from Arkansas was elected president in 1992, William Jefferson Clinton (Klimasewski, Patolo, & Tsikalas, 2015).

In 1972, Title IX was passed which established anti-discrimination policies related to women's access to equal educational opportunities (Lieberwitz et al., 2016). The acknowledgment and legislation of civil rights laws forever changed the composite of American classrooms (Lieberwitz et al., 2016). However, remaining debatable areas regarding federal and state accountability often define political party choice for Americans ((Lieberwitz et al., 2016).

Third Parties

Throughout the history of the United States a two-political party system has dominated (Bryce, 2017). The Constitution does list requirements for a two-party system, but since the Civil War, the Democrats and Republicans have dominated the political landscape (Berg-Andersson, 2001). There are important reasons why third parties have not emerged in the United States (Britannica.com, 2017). To win national elections, parties are required to adopt a moderate platform, and recent third party candidates have presented a more aggressive platform (Britannica.com, 2017). While third parties are gaining momentum in the United States, no third party could materialize a competitive presidential candidate (Britannica.com, 2017).

Fournier (2013) asserted either party would dramatically shift or voters will begin to demand alternative candidates. Over the past few election cycles, three larger third parties have emerged, the Constitution Party, the Green Party of the United States, and

the Libertarian Party (Gunmzburger, 2017). The Constitution Party's platform surrounds seven principles:

- Life: Life for all human beings: from conception to natural death.
- Personal Liberty: Constrain the Government to its enumerated powers as such that it does not impede the Liberty of the People whom it serves
- Property Rights: Each individual possesses the right to own and steward personal property without government burden.
- Originalist Interpretation: Interpret the Founding Documents according to the meaning originally intended by the Founding Fathers.
- Family: Family is the Bedrock of a healthy Society. It is imperative that government maintains a favorable position to the divinely instituted nuclear family, not one that leads to its destruction.
- Personal Responsibility: Americanist ideals are rooted in self-sustenance. Government social and cultural policies have undermined the work ethic, even as the government's economic and regulatory policies have undermined the ability of our citizens to obtain work.
- Sound Money & Constitution Banking: End the Fed & Return to the Stability of Gold and Silver-Based Money. (Constitutionparty.com, 2017)

Regarding education, the party strongly opposes federally supported programs such as Common Core Standards, Race-to-the-Top, and the Constitution party favors elimination of the U.S. Department of Education (Ujifusa, 2016).

The Green Party was officially recognized by the Federal Election Commission in 1991 as is the largest left-wing, third party in the United States (Gomez, 2016). The party

endorses the Black Lives Matter movement and its 1996 vice-presidential candidate, Baraka, had early involvement in the Black Libertarian movement, a “militant Marxist-Leninist movement advocating for the ‘self-determination’ of African-Americans in the United States and the overthrow of capitalism, during the 1960s, ’70s, and early ’80s” (Gomez, 2016, p. 26). The Green Party of the United States has 10 key values:

- Grassroots Democracy-accountability of the elected official is important.
Every person who participates in democracy should have a say;
- Social Justice and Equal Opportunity-all people have an equal opportunity to the available resources put forth in our country;
- Ecological Wisdom-humans must understand that we must live within our resource limits;
- Non-violence-other alternatives need to be developed to handle today’s patterns of violence;
- Decentralization-a centralization of wealth and power is one of the problems in society, the wealth and power of a few needs to be restructured and less centralized;
- Community-Based Economics-want workplace structure to be equally divided where employees have a democratic say;
- Feminism and Gender Equality-get rid of the male dominance society, promote equality;
- Respect for Diversity-support the promotion of leadership to people who have traditionally be closed out;

- Personal and Global Responsibility-work with individuals who foster economic justice, foster peace and the health of the planet;
- Future Focus and Sustainability-Long term goals should be in place to protect the Earth. (Gp.org, 2016)

Unique to education, the Green Party is straightforward in their policy to end high-stakes testing and public school privatization (Ujifusa, 2016). The 2016 presidential candidate, Jill Stein, made it clear the party opposed merit pay to punish teachers and advocated for ridding student debt to make college tuition free (Ujifusa, 2016).

Gary Johnson ran as the 2016 presidential candidate for the Libertarian Party, and “in 1999, after winning a second term, Johnson became the highest-ranking elected official in America to call for the full legalization of marijuana” (Lizza, 2016, p. 29).

Historian Richard Hofstadter wrote in 1955:

Third parties come buzzing to life when they seize upon an issue that the two main parties have ignored. If they gain enough popular support—the sting—one or both sides will adapt to the electorate’s demands and co-opt the third party’s ideas. (as cited in Lizza, 2016, p. 29)

It is important to note no third party candidate has ever won an electoral vote since George Wallace in 1968 (Lizza, 2016). The Libertarian Party has a platform that is stated on its website:

- Personal Liberty-anyone has the right to make decisions for themselves, but they are responsible for the consequences of their choices;
- Economic Liberty-all members of society have the right to economic success; the government should only interfere if they are protecting property rights;

- Securing Liberty—the only purpose of government is to safeguard individual rights. (Lp.org, 2017)

The Libertarian Party believes there is no role for the federal government in education (Ujifusa, 2016). Recent 2016 presidential candidate, Gary Johnson, campaigned to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education and to return control to the state and local levels (Ujifusa, 2016). The party opposes a national curriculum and the Common Core State Standards (Ujifusa, 2016).

Current Party System Influence on Education

Ornstein (2014) believes politics are dysfunctional due to sharp partisan and ideological polarization. It is generally understood in traditional two-party systems and majoritarian democracy—that voters can “vote out” politicians who violate mandates or the will of the people (Quinn, 2016, p. 120). However, voters can be left at bay when both major parties undertake an unexpected turn or shift to the center leaving traditional partisans in “a bind” (Quinn, 2016, p. 120). In this case:

. . . voters have four imperfect options: punish the governing party by throwing the rascals out, but in doing so vote for a party that is ideologically more distant; abstain, and withdraw from the democratic process; vote for a minor party that has no hope of influencing government formation, but which might detach enough votes to allow the ideologically more distant major opposition party to win; and forgive the governing party its mandate breaking. All of these options represent accountability failures. (Quinn, 2016, p. 120)

Research by Quinn (2016) found that no matter how badly politicians behave, no one will be held accountable or ejected if the public does not believe there exists someone better to replace them.

The two parties today remain divided over many issues including social problems, how to move the economy forward, and government involvement in the lives of its citizens (Britannica.com, 2017). Republicans are against government programs as solutions to the nation's problems, while Democrats believe government involvement is fit for the nation (Flanders, 2007). Republicans believe in laissez-faire capitalism, lower taxes, and conservative social policies (Britannica.com, 2016b). In contrast, Democrats believe in federal programs and government involvement to better the lives of the citizens of the United States (Britannica.com, 2016a).

The Democratic Party today has different factions in it; there are Euro-style democratic socialists like Bernie Sanders, traditionalist Democrats like Elizabeth Warren, and centrist moderate liberals like Martin O'Malley (Gunmzburger, 2017). The Republican Party today also has varied factions with traditional establishment conservatives like Paul Ryan (Speaker of the House), "Religious Right" (Mike Huckabee and Vice President Mike Pence), libertarians (Rand Paul), and centrist Tea Party conservatives like Ted Cruz and the President Donald Trump who is a populist and does not fit into any of the above-mentioned descriptors (Gunmzburger, 2017).

The Democrat and Republican Education Platforms. Each party has a platform specific to education. The democratic platform for education appears to advocate free public education for all children regardless of class:

In recent years Democrats have further increased access to higher education and restructured and dramatically expanded college financial aid while making federal programs simpler, more reliable, and more efficient for students. In 2010, President Obama signed into law student loan reform that cut out the role of big banks. The Obama administration also doubled our investment in Pell Grants and made it easier for students to pay back student loans. President Obama has worked to reform the higher education system and invested the most in student aid since the G.I. Bill. Democrats are committed to protecting that progress because affordable public education is the foundation of our middle class. Democrats want every child - no matter their zip code - to have access to a quality public K-12 education, and for college to be affordable for every American. We know that as the global marketplace grows more competitive, we need to expand opportunities for higher education and job training. Democrats are committed to increasing the college-completion rate as well as the share of students who are prepared for budding industries with specific job-related skills. Democrats recognize education as the most pressing economic issue in America's future, and we cannot allow our country to fall behind in a global economy. We must prepare the next generation for success in college and the workforce. (Democrats.org, 2017)

The Republican platform advocates for parent-choice and decentralization of the education system:

Education is much more than schooling. It is the whole range of activities by which families and communities transmit to a younger generation, not just

knowledge and skills, but ethical and behavioral norms and traditions. It is the handing over of a cultural identity. That is why American education has, for the last several decades, been the focus of constant controversy, as centralizing forces from outside the family and community have sought to remake education in order to remake America. They have done immense damage. The federal government should not be a partner in that effort, as the Constitution gives it no role in education. At the heart of the American Experiment lies the greatest political expression of human dignity: The self-evident truth that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” That truth rejects the dark view of the individual as human capital — a possession for the creation of another’s wealth. Parents are a child’s first and foremost educators and have primary responsibility for the education of their children. Parents have a right to direct their children’s education, care, and upbringing. We support a constitutional amendment to protect that right from interference by states, the federal government, or international bodies such as the United Nations. We reject a one-size-fits-all approach to education and support a broad range of choices for parents and children at the state and local level. We likewise repeat our long-standing opposition to the imposition of national standards and assessments, encourage the parents and educators who are implementing alternatives to Common Core, and congratulate the states which have successfully repealed it. Their education reform movement calls for choice-based, parent-driven accountability at every stage of schooling. It affirms higher expectations for all

students and rejects the crippling bigotry of low expectations. It recognizes the wisdom of local control of our schools and it wisely sees consumer rights in education—choice—as the most important driving force for renewing education. It rejects excessive testing and “teaching to the test” and supports the need for strong assessments to serve as a tool so teachers can tailor teaching to meet student needs. We applaud America’s great teachers, who should be protected against frivolous lawsuits and should be able to take reasonable actions to maintain discipline and order in the classroom. Administrators need flexibility to innovate and to hold accountable all those responsible for student performance. A good understanding of the Bible being indispensable for the development of an educated citizenry, we encourage state legislators to offer the Bible in a literature curriculum as an elective in America’s high schools. We urge school districts to make use of teaching talent in the business community, STEM fields, and the military, especially among our returning veterans. Rigid tenure systems should be replaced with a merit-based approach in order to attract the best talent to the classroom. All personnel who interact with school children should pass background checks and be held to the highest standards of personal conduct.

(Gop.com, 2017)

While the primary investigator chose to sample politicians from the democratic and republican parties, there are those who believe the two-party system may become obsolete (Fournier, 2013). Americans are currently frustrated with politics while the country is amid a wrenching economic shift “from the industrial era to an info-tech economy” (Fournier, 2013, p. 5).

Policies, such as ESEA, NCLB, and ESSA, present legislators and school leaders with financial challenges (Ikpa, 2016). Budgetary constraints often limit the ability to deliver quality services in all schools (Ikpa, 2016). School districts have relied on property taxes, yet property wealth per pupil varies drastically from district to district (Ikpa, 2016).

With the changing of political parties after the election of President Donald J. Trump in November 2016, Republican majorities govern both the House of Representatives and the Senate at the federal level (Zellmer & Meyer, 2017). In Missouri, Governor Eric R. Greitens serves as the 56th Governor and, likewise, has Republican majority in both the Missouri House and Senate. According to Ujifusa (2017), “With the election of Donald Trump to the presidency and Republicans’ continued control of Congress for at least the next two years, the prospects for increased education funding are not stellar in the near future” (p. 14).

Politicians continue to voice education as a national priority, yet funding formulas continue to fall short of what has been stated (Ikpa, 2016). A part of the ESSA that consolidates many “federal programs into block grants for states and covers areas like the arts and education technology is authorized for \$1.6 billion in the law” (Ujifusa, 2017a, p. 14). Under the new Republican Congress, the United States Senate overturned the accountability rules for the ESSA with a 50-49 block (Ujifusa, 2017b, para. 1). Those who voted to block the rules found them to be restrictive and regulatory and said: “the regulations improperly prescribe how states must build rating systems for schools, and how they must handle relatively high opt-outs from mandatory state tests, among other instances” (Ujifusa, 2017b, para. 6).

Summary

The NCLB Act did help move forward the educational accountability factor with states and school districts (Lewis & Young, 2013). Many people felt the federal government reached too far and there was no precedent for the national government interfering in education (Grissom & Herrington, 2012). Bushaw and Lopez (2012) stated there are things U.S. citizens do agree upon: closing the achievement gap and holding schools accountable. The data now available to schools are greater than any point in history; schools must collaborate on how to use data to improve students' performance and chances for success (Chenoweth, 2015).

In Chapter Two, a review of the related literature was presented. Chapter Three is comprised of the methodology, including the collection of data, for the study. The population, sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis are reviewed. An analysis of the data is described in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, the findings related to each research question, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research are detailed.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The federal government's involvement in education has had a trickle-down effect on state legislators and school administrators (Krebs, 2015). This effect has not always been studied in-depth, but understanding these mandates from the federal government and the effects on state government and local schools is vital. The researcher studied Missouri legislators and administrators from across the state and their perceptions of the "help" the federal government either mandates or provides. The administrators were chosen from different parts of the state and from various sizes of school districts. The legislators were equally divided between Democrats and Republicans and were chosen from both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Problem and Purpose Overview

Problem. Education is a symbol of American life yet decisions which impact public schools remain at the center of controversy. Though both parties, Democrat and Republican, advocate each party is pro-education, the chasm between the two parties remains wide. A report which examined school finance systems and distribution of resources found a vast disparity among the states (Strauss, 2014). Moreover, "many states have funding systems with flat or regressive funding distribution patterns which ignore the need for additional funding in high-poverty districts" (Straus, 2017, para 4).

Legislative directives may have both a positive and negative influence on public schools (Darden, 2006). Children rich or poor, English speaking or not, and of every race and background may receive an education (Darden, 2006). However, Darden (2006) related:

What is dazzling about public education, then, is that it can be successful in an environment where laws buffet it with long lists of dos and don'ts, politicians make demands and sometimes lodge unfair characterizations, business leaders cast doubt on credibility and competency, and nervous parents worry that a kindergartener's shapes on a page translate into whether their son or daughter will get into Harvard 12 years hence. Each day, districts are beholden to a staggering list of laws, regulations, rules, and policies that motivate and control behavior. Federal, state, and local governments generate reams of expectations. Court decisions are unending. Requirements are highly complicated and ultimately determine what board members, employees, and students must do or are forbidden to do. (Darden, 2006, paras 9, 10)

Purpose. The purpose of this research project was to investigate the perspectives of state legislators and school administrators regarding federal education legislation and its impact on public education. According to Geier (2014), the federal government, while intentionally absent from the United States Constitution, has always maintained a subversive desire to influence the nation's education system. A limited number of studies have examined the relationship of federal education legislation and the Local Educational Agency (LEA). It was the desire of the primary investigator to produce data which may be used to fill this gap of knowledge and more clearly understand how federal governmental decisions impact the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators.

Research questions. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators toward expanding high-quality, state-funded preschool for children from low- and moderate-income families building from the Administration's Preschool Development Grants program?

2. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators toward expanding support for high-performing public charter schools for high-need students with state monies?

3. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators regarding measures for school accountability?

4. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators regarding the use of uniform national standards?

Research Design

For this research, the primary investigator used mixed methods research. The investigator first used qualitative measures to collect perceptual data, which were then quantified for analysis. Qualitative data are defined as data not recorded in numerical form and can include interviews and written documents (Trochim, Donnelly, & Arora, 2016). The participants, both school administrators and state legislators, were directly involved in the research process itself (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The primary investigator quantified the number of responses in addition to allowing the participants to articulate their perspectives. This promoted validity, reliability, and objectivity (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Robinson (2014) added:

Coherence is maximised by systematically fitting the sampling processes with research aims, research questions, data collection and analysis, so that all are mutually supported and theoretically consistent, and by maintaining consistency between the reach of the sample universe and attempted generalisations. (p. 38)

The mixed methods for this research focused on the intent of “mixing, to integrate the qualitative interviews and the quantitative data” (Creswell, 2014, p. 151).

The instrument is a device used to gather data (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The instrument utilized for this research was an interview survey tested through a sample group to determine if expected results were derived from the instrument. As described by Creswell (2014), “the qualitative findings help to explain the quantitative results” (p. 225).

Ethical Considerations

The primary investigator is a Missouri School Administrator but has no relationship with the participants in the study. Lloyd and Hopkins (2015) determined, “the methods whereby researchers gain access and recruit participants for research are understandably significant issues for the conduct of ethical research” (p. 306). The epistemological and methodological choices of the researcher have ethical implications (Jansen, 2015). Following approval of the research project from Lindenwood University Institution Review Board (see Appendix A), the primary investigator obtained informed consent from each participant in the sample (see Appendix B). Valid informed consent for all survey participants included: (1) Disclosure of study procedures and potential risks to prospective research participants; (2) participant comprehension of the information, and (3) participant voluntary agreement, free of coercion and undue influence, to research

participation (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Care was taken to eliminate or reduce the risk of undue influence or coercion of participants by removing all identifiers from the transcribed and coded responses to an oral, scripted interview. Responses were kept on a password protected computer for the duration of the research, and all data will be secured and destroyed three years after the study concludes.

To assure anonymity, when discussing identifiable statistics, such as the thoughts of an administrator or legislator or a division of political party affiliation, use of approximations or slight modifications were employed by the primary investigator. Lloyd and Hopkins (2015) stated, “the recognition that researchers adopt multiple positions throughout research, which is implicit to the ways that knowledge is situated, constructed and understood, is conventional ethical practice” (p. 307). The primary investigator used data codes or pseudonyms to lessen the possibility of identifying participants. When the sample size is small, participants must be advised there is a possibility one’s comments may be recognized even with approximations and modifications in place (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Once the transcription was complete, the primary investigator presented the transcript to each participant for review and provided an opportunity for the participant to ask questions or comment before the transcription was finalized. If there was a possibility of a conflict of interest between the investigator and participants, specific procedures were set in place, such as a third-party who distributed/collected data, expunged identifying data, and conducted/transcribed the interviews.

Population and Sample

With the simple random sample, there was an equal chance (probability) of selecting each unit from within the population when creating the sample (Laerd Statistics, 2012). According to Fraenkel et al. (2015), “A simple random sample is one in which each and every member of the population has an equal and independent chance of being selected” (p. 95). To delineate this sample, a set of inclusionary criteria was specified for this study. Approximately 26 individuals were chosen as the sample for this action research project from a greater population. There are 163 seats in the Missouri House of Representatives, including 45 Democrats, 117 Republicans, and one Vacancy (MO.gov, 2017). There are 34 seats in the Missouri Senate, including eight Democrats, 22 Republicans, and two Vacancies (MO.gov, 2017).

The inclusionary homogeneity variable for this study was that of serving as a legislator. The variation and cross-contextual approach, or inclusionary heterogeneous variables, were Democrats vs. Republicans and Senators vs. Representatives. In addition, an inclusionary homogenous variable of serving as a Missouri school administrator allowed for a choice of population, while the heterogeneous variable of serving in a large versus small district allowed for a plurality of voice in the sample. To acquire an equal, simple, random sample, the primary investigator selected 18 superintendents, four state Senators, and four state Representatives.

The primary investigator recruited a systematic random sample of 18 school administrators who represented each of the nine Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs) of Missouri (see Figure 3). A random number generator was applied to all school districts in Missouri, and a random drawing of school districts was performed.

Random sampling allowed for the selection of cases from a list of all or most cases “within the sampling university population using some kind of random selection procedure” (Robinson, 2014, p. 31).

While serving as an administrator allowed for homogeneity of the sample, the location of each RPDC sample allowed for geographical heterogeneity. From each of the nine regions, a superintendent was chosen from a large district and a small district. For this study, a large district was designated as being in the upper 50% of the student population in the RPDC area. The sample universe for this study was methodical for generalizing the study’s findings to future research.

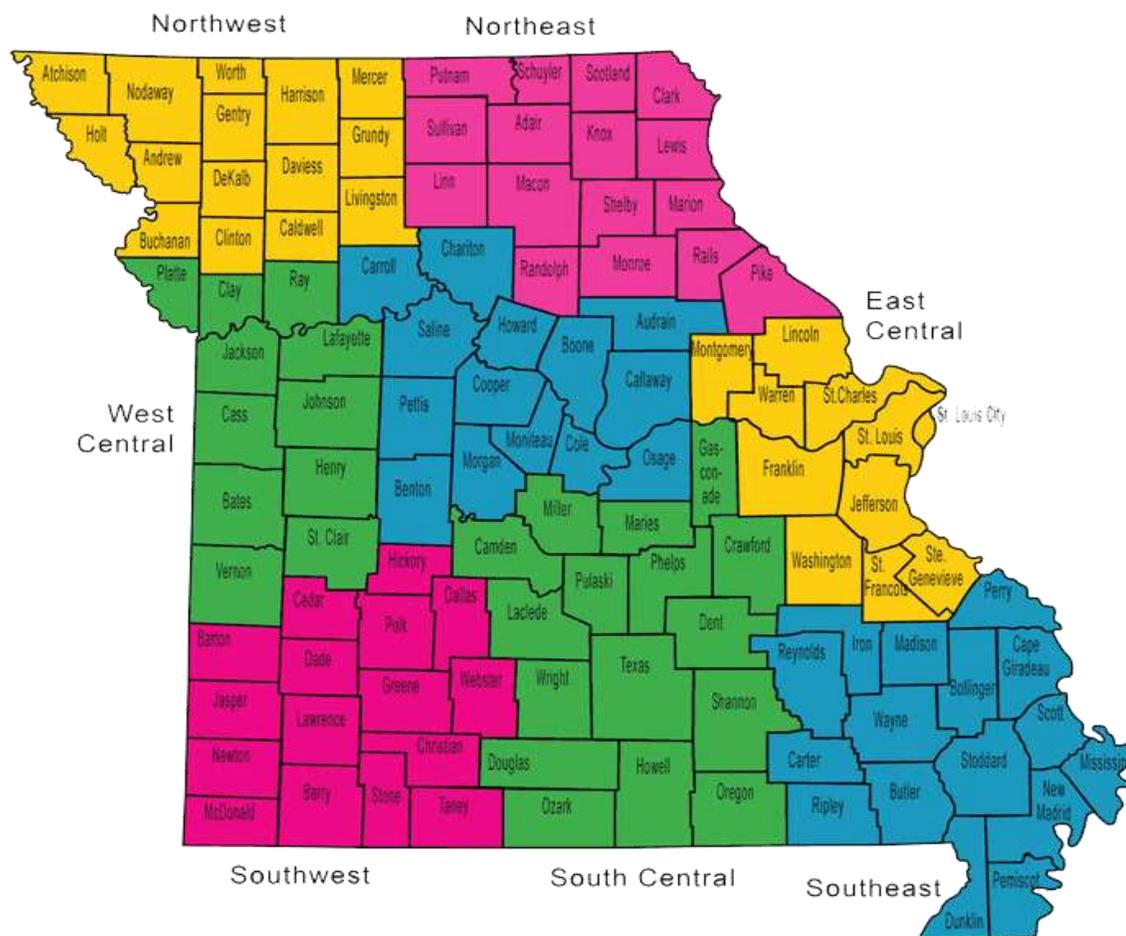


Figure 3. Missouri’s 9 Regional Professional Development Centers. Adapted from “Missouri RPDCs,” by MODESE, 2017, Retrieved from https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/RPDCChart_02_09_2017.pdf

Valid informed consent was obtained from a sample of 18 Missouri school administrators and 8 legislators before conducting an interview of volunteer participants. Valid informed consent for all participants included (1) Disclosure of study procedures and potential risks to prospective research participants; (2) participant comprehension of the information, and (3) participant voluntary agreement, free of coercion and undue influence, to research participation.

Instrumentation.

The interview protocol (see Appendix C) was a set of questions answered by the participants of the study (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Participants, both administrators and state legislators, were interviewed either in person or over the phone, and the answers to questions were recorded by the primary investigator. The primary investigator clarified matters not understood by the interviewees. When necessary, the primary investigator asked the interviewees to expand or explain their answers further.

Data Collection.

Upon approval of the Lindenwood Institution Review Board (IRB), data in the form of interviews were collected according to the needs and circumstances of the participants. The primary investigator then followed the RPDC map to select districts from each area. The primary investigator contacted the potential participants by phone or electronic mail to explain the project and ask if the administrator would participate in an interview.

The same procedures were followed when selecting the state legislators. Once an administrator or legislator committed to participation in the research project, an IRB consent by the university was emailed or faxed to the participant. Once the consent was returned to the primary investigator, an interview by phone or in person was scheduled. Anonymity and confidentiality of responses were addressed with each participant within the letter of informed consent.

Data Analysis.

Methods of data analysis are primarily determined by the hypotheses to be tested or research questions to be answered (Fraenkel et al., 2015). A mixed methods design was used to analyze the interview data for this study. Next, descriptive statistics allowed

the researcher to provide quantitative details from the coded responses (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The number of responses in favor or against the criteria in the instrument easily allowed for expanded conversations for the collection of qualitative data to build on the quantitative results (Creswell, 2014).

Summary

The mixed methodology described in Chapter Three was used to calculate data for the research questions of this study. In Chapter Four, a report of the findings through data analyses are presented. Detailed are data regarding the perspectives of the administrators and legislators. Chapter Five includes the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

In this chapter, the data gathered from Missouri legislators and Missouri superintendents are discussed. All parties involved were asked four opinion questions about federal government involvement in education:

1. What are your beliefs about Federal Title I preschool for children from low- and moderate-income families?
2. What are your beliefs about federal legislation which supports charter schools?
3. What are your beliefs regarding measures for school accountability imposed by the federal government?
4. How do you feel about the use of uniform national standards?

The opinion questions were posed to direct each participant to “think about some topic or issue. Answers to such questions call attention to the respondent’s goals, beliefs, attitudes, or values” (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 451). The structured interview protocol was used to obtain information that could be contrasted and compared (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Analysis of Data

In statistics and related fields, a similarity measure or similarity function is a real-valued function that quantifies the similarity between two objects (Fraenkel et al., 2015). According to Romney, Moore, Batchelder, and Hsia (2000), “A variety of statistical methods such as comparing mean correlations within and between subgroups, principal components analysis (PCA), analysis of variance (ANOVA), and simple visualization

techniques can be appropriately applied to partitioning of data” (p. 518). For this study, the primary investigator used descriptive statistics and simple visualization techniques for quantitative analysis to determine whether similarities exist among perceptions of the sample population.

The interview protocol allowed the researcher to collect perceptual data, code for quantitative measures, then use the results in descriptive analysis. According to Romney et al. (2000), “A variety of statistical methods such as comparing mean correlations within and between subgroups, principal components analysis (PCA), analysis of variance (ANOVA), and simple visualization techniques can be appropriately applied to partitioning of data” (p. 518). For this study, the primary investigator used descriptive statistics and simple visualization techniques for quantitative analysis to determine whether similarities existed among the perceptions of the sample.

Research question one. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators toward expanding high-quality, state-funded preschool for children from low- and moderate-income families building from the Administration’s Preschool Development Grants program?

Per the data from this study, all eight legislators agreed Title I grants are beneficial to low- and moderate-income families. One Republican legislator stated:

I was very fortunate growing up, my parents were teachers and read and nurtured me. I have seen so many kids that did not have that advantage. I think it is very important for kids to have early childhood education before they get to kindergarten. I am for this.

Another Republican legislator answered question one as follows:

The results have been somewhat overwhelming for early childhood education. It is so important to start training those young people and educating them. We can identify problems at an earlier age with helps everyone. I will be honest. I am not an expert on Title I and the strings that are attached to it. I do know it is pretty important for some of our schools because it is the only source of income for early childhood education. I have kind of wrestled with having targeted for early childhood funding in the State of Missouri; there is even a proposal on the November ballot.

On the other side of the aisle, a Democratic legislator stated:

I am in support of it. Research shows that investing in early childhood education up to fourth grade has a tremendous impact on grades 4-12. There is a lot of data that the earlier intervention, the more successful the child will be. Me personally, I am a product of a Federal Title I program student.

Another Democratic legislator answered question one as follows:

I am all in favor of it. It really benefits kids. I was a teacher and counselor in the Kansas City Public School District for 29 years. In my district, we had a lot of low-income kids. The extra funds allowed us to get extra reading teachers, among other things.

One school administrator answered “maybe” to the question of Title I money from the federal government. This administrator wanted the money but did not like the mandates attached to the money, and stated:

I have mixed emotions about the question. It would be great to think the state would have enough resources to fund all of the needed programs. Unfortunately, we do not have [the resources] or [cannot] allocate the resources, and we have to rely on the federal government and their money. If the resources are not in Missouri, then, yes, federal dollars are a great resource. All the data in the world will show you that early childhood money is well spent on low- and moderate-income families. It is critically important that they [low- and moderate-income families] have early exposure to education and schooling. I am for it, then. This is a hard question; we hate to rely on federal dollars.

The rest of the school administrators answered “yes” to the first question. One example of a “yes” answer to question one from a school administrator was as follows:

I fully support the preschool opportunities. In my superintendency, I’ve served communities with high amounts of poverty, and both schools had fully functioning preschools. This allowed the tuition to be reimbursed per student depending on the individual family’s income level(s). There is a significant difference between the incoming kindergarten students and the students that attended preschool in a “non-school” sanctioned preschool. The students attending a school-sanctioned preschool are much more prepared both academically and behaviorally.

The other 17 school administrators answered “yes” to question one. One superintendent asserted:

I believe that Title I funded preschools are vital to the success of educating students. Research suggests that investing in a student’s learning at an earlier age

increases their chances for academic success. Health screenings also are important to identifying potential problems at an earlier age. With the changes in society over the last 20 years, schools are expected to take on an increasingly larger role in educating students. Title I preschools help answer some of those challenges.

Another school administrator stated:

Federal Title I preschools are a great way to overcome the achievement gap that we see in low- and moderate-income families. I believe the idea is sound, but the execution is flawed. More local control on the logistics of the services would greatly benefit the students and families involved. The needs of students vary greatly from community to community and overlaying one-size-fits-all programs are not as beneficial as programs that are specific to local needs.

Responses are consistent with research, which found early childhood education especially vital for children with physical or mental delays or those who live in poverty (Swaminathan et al., 2014).

As seen in Table 1, all legislators polled for this study agreed Missouri should support funding for preschool education. While 100% of the administrators from the small districts believed in financing preschool education, one of the administrators from a larger district was unsure where he stood on this issue (see Table 2). When viewed cumulatively, 25 of the 26 interviewed, espoused funding preschool education (see Table 3).

Table 1

Legislators' Perspectives of Funding for State Preschools

	Yes	No	Cumulative Yes Percentage
Republican	4	0	100.0%
Democrat	4	0	100.0%

Table 2

Administrators' Perspectives of Funding for State Preschools

	Yes	No	Maybe	Cumulative Yes Percentage
Large Districts	8	0	1	89.9%
Small Districts	9	0	0	100.00%

$\text{Percentage Difference} = \frac{ \Delta V }{\frac{\Sigma V}{2}} \times 100$ $= \frac{ V_1 - V_2 }{\frac{(V_1 + V_2)}{2}} \times 100$	$\frac{ V_1 - V_2 }{\frac{(V_1 + V_2)}{2}} \times 100$ $= \frac{ 94.4 - 100 }{\frac{(94.4 + 100)}{2}} \times 100$ $= \frac{ -5.6 }{\frac{194.4}{2}} \times 100$ $= \frac{5.6}{97.2} \times 100$ $= 0.0576132 \times 100$ $= 5.76132\% \text{ difference}$
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Figure 4. Percentage difference formula. (2017). *CalculatorSoup®: Online calculator resources*. Retrieved from <http://www.calculatorsoup.com/calculators/algebra/percent-difference-calculator.php>

Table 3

Perspectives of Percentages for Funding for State Preschools

	Yes	No	Maybe	Cumulative Yes Percentage
Administrators	17	0	1	94.4%
Legislators	8	0	0	100.00%

Research question two. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators toward expanding support for high-performing public charter schools for high-need students with state monies?

There was one, lone state legislator who answered “yes” to question two. This Republican legislator responded to the question as follows:

I have been for federal charter schools my entire career, even before I became a state representative. I felt like whenever I went to the state capitol the charter school lobbyist explained what charter schools are, and I explained to them that is how a rural school is run. I feel like up in the urban areas they can identify certain groups of children. The mega school districts in urban areas and the mega-bureaucracies cause a huge disconnect for all involved. I am for federal legislation as long as the charter schools are overseen properly and teach the skills needed to become productive citizens.

There were four “maybe” answers to question two by state legislators, and one answer was as follows:

I am in the middle of that issue. Lean more towards not creating new charter schools. In my area, there are quite a few charter schools that are successful. The concept of charter schools can be detrimental to education. Charter schools really do no better than public schools; the only benefit is that sometimes they cost less. In my area (St. Louis) charter schools really do not do any better than local public schools. In some cases, some are better, and some are worse. There has been no real educational benefit to charter schools. I have to admit the school industry

that is doing well, let them expand. The argument is not as important as the low income vs. higher income argument.

Another “maybe” answer included the following:

I have mixed emotions on charter schools. Some areas of the state, charter schools are beneficial. Urban areas I think they (charter schools) can help, but I see no benefit to rural areas. It just depends on the location.

A “no” answer from a state legislator was as follows:

I do not like federal legislation coming down to tell us in Missouri how to run our schools. They are not in a position to know what is best for the citizens of Missouri. I am in a position to know what is better for my district, not the federal boys up in Washington, DC. They don’t understand what is best for my district. They know nothing about rural schools. I do not support charter schools.

With school administrators, 14 answered “no” to question two, and four answered “maybe.” Three of the four “maybe” answers were expressed by administrators from small schools. A “no” answer from a superintendent from a large school district included the following:

I am not a fan of charter schools. I think that is the federal government trying to fix local issues. If that funding went into supporting those local schools to address the issues they have, [funding] is a better way to do things. It [the charter school] uses resources that should go to the states. Data shows that charter schools are no more effective than public schools. It does not surprise me; I feel strongly that those dollars should go to public schools and let the school boards and states decide how the money is to be used.

One administrator (small school) expressed:

I am not supportive of charter schools unless the charter schools are held to the exact same standards as public schools, which will likely not happen (or the charter schools would be public schools). Until the playing field is equal, the idea of charter schools will not serve the “greater good.”

The lone school superintendent (large school) who answered “maybe” to question two stated:

I am a little ambivalent about charter schools, with all the competition going on, but the research shows that charter schools are no better than public schools. I have had an experience where charter schools have been ineffective. I am a proponent of public schools; often regulations are in place that allows charter schools to operate different than public schools. From a federal perspective, we must be careful how we do things; federal dollars need to go to public schools.

The data suggests both public and charter schools do a good and poor job.

It appears that although critical legislation is linked to the constitutionality of public funding “for schools to a limited and comprised form of public school governance,” legislative advocates will continue to explore expansion, especially in urban schools (Raam, 2016).

As seen in Table 4, only one Republican legislator polled for this study agreed Missouri should support funding for high-performing public charter schools for high-need students with state monies. All Democratic legislators were undecided with a maybe response for this question, and one Republican legislator said no, charter schools

should not be supported by state monies. No school administrators supported charter school expansion with state monies (see Table 5).

When analyzing similarities, there was a 25% difference between the legislators' and administrators' opinions on this topic. However, the "maybe" votes produced a different statistic. For state legislators, 75% expressed they may defend expanding support for high-performing public charter schools for high-need students with state monies. In contrast, only 22.22% of school administrators were undecided on this measure.

Table 4

Legislators' Perspectives of Charter School Expansion with State Monies

	Maybe	Yes	No	Cumulative Yes Percentage
Republican	2	1	1	25%
Democrat	4	0	0	0%

Table 5

Administrators' Perspectives of Charter School Expansion with State Monies

	Maybe	Yes	No	Cumulative Yes Percentage
Large Districts	1	0	8	0%
Small Districts	3	0	6	0%

Research question three. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators regarding measures for school accountability?

When asked their perceptions of the federal and state government holding local schools accountable for performance, only one legislator believed accountability from an outside entity might benefit local school districts (see Table 6). One legislator said, “Yes, accountability tools should be used to inform teachers.”

Overwhelmingly, the majority of those polled, or six of eight, voiced their opinions for increased local control. As displayed in Table 7, only one administrator expressed “yes” for increased federal and state accountability measures. The views were identical between administrators from large and small schools, with 77.8% of each sample noting they were not in favor of increased accountability. An example of a “maybe” answer by a state legislator was as follows:

The newly reauthorized ESEA looks to allow more flexible accountability measures. It allows states to develop their own measures and recognizes the importance of music and the arts in aiding the learning process. I do not object to federal accountability as long as there is a recognition of the importance of local/state input in developing accountability measures.

Another state legislator expressed:

The more local you can get the evaluation tools, the better off you are having edicts and evaluations coming from Washington, DC not near as effective as coming as the mandates coming from Jefferson City. More and more strict evaluations would not be effective from the feds. Some schools in Missouri that forgo all federal funding so they do not have to deal with the federal government.

On average, school districts get about 9% from federal funding, and so many districts do not think it is worth it with all the things that are associated with the federal intrusion in school districts.

A school administrator asserted:

I believe there are some appropriate measures that would be beneficial for districts to use to compare their district to other districts across the United States, but it should be used minimally, and they should not be a huge component of accreditation. It should be left up to the states to determine that.

The “no” answers dominated question three by the school administrators. One superintendent argued:

Most schools in Missouri receive about 45% of their funding from local sources, 45% from state funding sources, and roughly 10% from the federal government. However, we receive an over-proportionate amount of unfunded mandates and “strings” to receive their small amount of money. As the old saying goes, they give us 10% of our budget and 90% of our reporting requirements. While accountability is a necessary evil, it has always been my belief we should be developing well-balanced, intelligent problem solvers not simply worrying about AYP, APR, or any of the other acronyms developed at the State and Federal level.

Another example of a “no” answer to question three included the following:

I worry about the state losing control of some of that. It is clearly identified that the state is in control of education. I do not think a consistent standard across the nation would be a good thing. We are all comparing apples to apples right now.

States can dumb down their tests to look good, and another state can make a rigorous test to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their education system, they get penalized.

The responses for this study were not clearly divided on party affiliation as is found at the national level regarding educational deregulation (Geier, 2014).

Table 6

Legislators' Perspectives of School Accountability

	Maybe	Yes	No	Cumulative Yes Percentage
Republican	0	1	3	25%
Democrat	1	0	3	0%

Table 7

Administrators' Perspectives of School Accountability

	Maybe	Yes	No	Cumulative Yes Percentage
Large Districts	2	0	7	0%
Small Districts	2	0	7	0%

Research question four. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators regarding the use of uniform national standards?

No legislator answered “yes” when asked whether he or she supported Uniform National Standards. Nine (50%) of the public-school administrators supported the use of

Uniform National Standards. This variance showed a wide disparity between the opinions of legislators and public school administrators.

One legislator responded:

This is a state issue; how do you set up standards for Missouri versus California or New York? Different areas of the country have different occupations and views on life. Federal standards are way wrong; national politicians have never lived in rural Missouri. The national politicians don't have a clue what is going on in Missouri. What is needed in St. Louis, Missouri, is different than what is needed in the boot heel of Missouri. I want the feds to stay out of it.

Another state legislator gave this response:

I want to allow teachers to teach to the individual student. We need to let them teach instead of giving them tests all the time. Unfortunately, teachers feel they now have to teach to the test. So yeah, there are some uniform national standards that can be used, but I am not sure there should be a mandate, but a direction on how we teach our kids.

One of the "yes" answers from a state legislator was as follows:

Standards are fine, but punishments that determine funding levels is bad. Nothing wrong with standards, but where NCLB messed up, the level and removal of funding was disastrous. School closing was an issue early, and now waivers happened because many schools would have been shut down and education did not improve.

School administrators provided varied responses to question four. Fifty percent of the 18 school administrators answered “yes” to question four, and the rest answered “no.” One school administrator replied:

I feel that school standards should be left up to the individual state legislatures and school boards. The demographics of an area in the United States should be taken into account and the curriculum adjusted accordingly. We don’t educate all students the same way....nor should we.

An example of a “yes” answer to question four included the following:

I am a strong believer in local control. With this thought in mind, we do need a baseline to work from. We, as educators, should always be striving for high academic standards for our students. This is, however, where things get murky. The knowledge base for a student growing up in the Ozark hills is much different than the education needed by a student from the St. Louis or Chicago area. So I feel that we need a base standard to work from, but educators should be given freedom to work with our kids in areas which will promote them as they grow. An example would be FFA, Conservation, etc. for our geographical area.

Finally, an administrator responded:

The answer is yes. It compares apples to apples, and I think that is important. We are in a global market, and national standards are important. I say that with a caveat: the government should not tell us what resources, teaching strategies, and pedagogies we should use. I do support that the federal government sets learning targets for national standards. What is expected of students graduating from

K-12? I do support that, so we can compare with each other. But I do not think they should be involved in learning strategies and how we teach.

With widespread national and state opposition to national core standards, it is unlikely a common, equitable curriculum will be adopted by states for some time (Ujifusa, 2016).

The data for question four are presented in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8

Legislators' Perspectives of Uniform National Standards

	Maybe	Yes	No	Cumulative Yes Percentage
Republican	0	0	4	0%
Democrat	1	2	1	50%

Table 9

Administrators' Perspectives of Uniform National Standards

	Maybe	Yes	No	Cumulative Yes Percentage
Large Districts	2	4	3	44.44%
Small Districts	1	5	3	55.56%

Summary

In this chapter, an analysis of the interview responses were presented. Tables and figures were provided to further illustrate the responses. Chapter Five provides a summary of the complete study. The findings are discussed for each of the four research questions. Conclusions are provided based on the outcomes of the study and the data analysis. Chapter Five also includes implications for practice. Recommendations for future studies and additional research are discussed.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

Following a review of relevant literature, a gap in perceptions of federal government involvement in education between state legislators and school administrators was identified. Research is abundant about federal government immersion in education, but there is a lack of the investigation of viewpoints from state legislators and school administrators. The primary investigator interviewed 18 school administrators from the nine different RPDC areas in Missouri. Within each RPDC area, two school administrators were chosen. One administrator was from the upper 50% of the school population in that RPDC area, and the other administrator was selected from among the bottom 50% of the school population. The primary investigator also interviewed eight state legislators from Missouri, which included two Democratic Senators, two Democratic State Representatives, two Republican Senators, and two Republican State Representatives.

Chapter Five consists of the findings of the four research questions which guided this study. The findings are disaggregated and discussed. Quotes from the interviewed sample provide additional insight into this investigation. In this chapter, the primary investigator attempted to determine if findings from the study are similar to or different from the literature.

The four questions asked by the primary investigator to school administrators and state legislators were broken down into three potential answers: yes, no, or maybe. The primary investigator parsed the information based on political party affiliation and school size.

Findings

Research question one. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators toward expanding high-quality, state-funded preschool for children from low- and moderate-income families building from the Administration's Preschool Development Grants program?

For this research question, the primary investigator wanted to understand if school administrators and state legislators have similar views of Title I preschool money for low- and moderate-income families. All legislators polled for this study agreed Missouri should expand high-quality, state-funded preschool for children from low- and moderate-income families. However, when polling administrators from the regions of Missouri, one administrator from a larger district was uncertain whether the state should fund preschools for low- and moderate-income families through the Administration's Preschool Development Grants program.

The United States Constitution does not mention education, which means education is supposed to be left to each state; the education of children is not intended to be overseen by the United States government (Geier, 2014). The founding fathers feared a strong central government, which is why they did not want the education system to be controlled by the federal government (Geier, 2014). The Department of Education was created in 1867 to help the states by collecting data to establish effective and more efficient schools (Cross, 2010). Since 1867, the Department of Education has changed names and locations, but it has always had the same mission of helping to improve teaching (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Congress moved the Department of

Education from the Executive Branch to a Cabinet-level agency in 1980 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

For the past 50 years, education has changed throughout the United States, with the federal government increasing involvement in public education (Chopin, 2013). On April 9, 1965, Congress enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). To date, this was the most comprehensive federal education bill ever passed (Asen, 2012). The ESEA over the years has been reauthorized by Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter (Asen, 2012). President Ronald Regan reauthorized the ESEA for six years in 1981, and the ESEA had an automatic extension for a seventh year (Asen, 2012). During President Bill Clinton's tenure, he gave more money to schools with a greater population of low-income students and called it the Improving America's Schools Act (ESEA reauthorization) (Cross, 2010). President George Bush renamed the ESEA the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001 with more mandates put on public education through this reauthorization (Cross, 2010).

Research question two. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators toward expanding support for high-performing public charter schools for high-need students with state monies?

This question was posed to see where state legislators and school administrators stand on charter schools. Only one Republican legislator polled for this study agreed Missouri should support funding for high-performing public charter schools for high-need students with state monies. All Democratic legislators were undecided with a "maybe" response for this question, and one Republican legislator said

“no,” charter schools should not be supported by state monies. No school administrators supported charter school expansion with state monies.

When analyzing similarities, there was a 25% difference between the legislators’ and administrators’ opinions on this topic. However, the “maybe” votes produced a different statistic. For state legislators, 75% expressed they may support expanding support for high-performing public charter schools for high-need students with state monies. In contrast, only 22.22% of school administrators were undecided on this measure.

Charter schools are growing in popularity, especially in urban areas (Roch & Na, 2015). Charter schools were first started in Minnesota in 1991, and as of 2013, 41 states had established charter schools which serve approximately 5% of the public school population (Roch & Na, 2015). Special interest groups and educational activists have been proponents of charter schools, and big money has come into play since their start (Reckhow et al., 2015).

A school that combines public funding with private management is considered a charter school (Jha & Buckingham, 2015). Charter schools differ from public schools, as they receive state money but do not have to follow most state testing guidelines (Reckhow et al., 2015). Charter schools were set up in the beginning to address the needs of the community, stakeholders, and children (Richardson, 2017). With the huge amount of money involved in educating children, management organizations have started charter schools or have taken over operations of charter schools to help control costs and to save money (Bausell, 2016).

Research question three. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators regarding measures for school accountability?

This research question was designed to determine whether there are differences in opinions between state legislators and school administrators regarding school accountability. When asked their perceptions on federal and state governments holding local schools accountable for performance, only one legislator believed accountability from an outside entity might benefit local school districts. One legislator said, “Yes, accountability tools should be used to inform teachers.” Overwhelmingly, the majority of those polled, or six of eight, voiced their opinions on increased local control.

Only one administrator stated “yes” for increased federal and state accountability measures. The views were identical between administrators of large and small schools, with 77.8% of each sample noting they were not in favor of increased accountability. When compared to legislators, the outcome for this question was similar, with only a 3.64% difference of each sample choosing “no.”

The NCLB Act placed tight restrictions on public schools; this was the first of its kind in public education, and ironically the demise of NCLB was because of the tight constraints (Chopin, 2013). Education reform is a hot topic in today’s politically charged society; politicians and citizens alike are not willing to compromise when it comes to educating children (Bushaw & Lopez, 2012). The political divide has made it difficult for best practices to be used, and education has become a political fight to some (Chenoweth, 2015). The late 2000s saw an economic downturn, which caused a shift in how children were tested; a focus on inexpensive multiple-choice testing was used (Tanner, 2013). One stipulation of NCLB was that all teachers be highly qualified to

teach their subjects; however, the states were allowed to determine what highly qualified meant (Lewis & Young, 2013). In other words, the policy was a very good idea, but the change affected teaching minimally (Lewis & Young, 2013).

One of the five politics of distraction in schools is having more tests (Hattie, 2015). Schools that get Title I funding and fail to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years are deemed “in need of improvement” (Bogin & Nguyen-Hoang, 2014, p. 788). Multiple tests determine a school’s AYP (Bogin & Nguyen-Hoang, 2014). The NCLB Act set unattainable goals for schools, and when a school did not reach the goals set forth by NCLB, it was labeled “needs improvement” (Chopin, 2013, p. 423).

The next step in the evolution of NCLB was to grant waivers for states (McNeil, 2015). These waivers allowed states not to fail schools that could not meet the NCLB standards (McNeil, 2015). States and school boards were faced with difficult decisions put forth by NCLB (Chopin, 2013). Chopin (2013) noted states could either keep working to reach a goal which is unreachable, lower their standards (AYP goals) to reach their targets, decide not to accept funding attached to NCLB, or dumb down the tests.

President Obama signed into law on December 10, 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Peet & Vercelletto, 2016). The ESSA is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), last reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2002 under President George W. Bush (Krebs, 2015). The NCLB Act was a one-size-fits-all solution, but the ESSA gives states and local districts more decision-making power (Whitehouse, 2016). Under the ESSA, states are allowed to

choose their own goals and submit accountability plans to the Department of Education (“The Every Student Succeeds Act: Explained,” 2015).

Research question four. What are the perceptions of school administrators and state legislators regarding the use of uniform national standards?

The purpose of this question was to understand whether school administrators and state legislators have similar perceptions of requiring uniform national standards. No legislator answered “yes” when asked whether he or she supported Uniform National Standards. Nine (50%) of the public-school administrators supported the use of Uniform National Standards. This variance showed a wide disparity between the opinions of legislators and public school administrators.

Epistemology is affected by positional bias politicians may have related to their past and to their area of the state or country (Takacs, 2002). Everyone’s point-of-view is shaped by who they are in life and where they stand in society (Takacs, 2002). Self-awareness is demanding because humans have a hard time seeing outside their perspectives to identify universal truths (Tackas, 2002). Instead, people embrace their own personal and unique experiences (Tackas, 2002).

The expertise of individuals is both empowering and disempowering based on whether they can connect positionality to epistemology (Stout & Stanton, 2011). The concept can be difficult for politicians to understand (Stout & Stanton, 2011). It is hard for politicians and school administrators to appreciate a lack of understanding of certain viewpoints, or topics can be enlightened if they truly listen to stakeholders (Gibbons, 2009). Some who are in a position of power have never been challenged about their ideas; this is what creates positional bias (Harrison, 2006). Hypotheses may not always

be easy to prove because of human diversity and the complexity of beliefs (Harrison, 2006). For this reason, political authority and the truth may be difficult to quantify (Harrison, 2006).

Conclusions

In this section, the findings of this study are discussed in relation to the literature review in Chapter Two. The conclusions are addressed by research question.

Research question one. According to the data gathered from all 26 participants, there was one “maybe” answer for the question, and the rest of the participants answered “no” to question one. Every participant discussed the importance of early childhood education to the overall performance of children as they progress through school. One superintendent (small school) stated children who were involved in a school-sanctioned preschool were better “academically and behaviorally” for kindergarten. A state legislator talked about the “somewhat overwhelming” data which show how effective preschool is for children. Twenty of the 26 participants agreed early childhood education is one of the effective ways to ensure success in school. The lone “maybe” answer from a school administrator was not against Title I money or preschool, but rather the school administrator was against the need for federal money when Missouri mandates programs.

The NCLB Act placed unattainable goals and mandates on states (Chopin, 2013). Those mandates resulted in a greater need for early childhood education (Chopin, 2013). Many participants answered question one by saying “data showed,” or something similar, and with the NCLB and ESSA mandates and testing from the federal level, the participants determined early childhood education is even more important. Hattie (2015) stated one of the five politics of distraction in schools is having more tests. Schools that

receive Title I funding yet fail to meet AYP for two consecutive years are deemed “in need of improvement” (Bogin & Nguyen-Hoang, 2014, p. 788). A rise in preschool and early childhood education was caused by the pressure put on schools to perform on high-stakes testing (Bogin & Nguyen-Hoang, 2014). Initially, the law designated money to schools with a large percentage of students considered educationally deprived (Ladson-Billings, 2015). To qualify for Title I, 3%, or at least 100 students, in the district need to be considered low-income (Asen, 2012).

Research question two. Charter schools in Missouri only exist in Kansas City and St. Louis currently. As of March 1, 2017, a bill on the Missouri floor will attempt to expand charter schools to Class A counties. Opinions of charter schools varied greatly for participants in the study. Two Republican state legislators answered “maybe,” one responded “yes,” and one responded “no” to question two. Democratic state legislators all answered “maybe” to question two. Six administrators answered “no” to question two, and three answered “yes.” Eight large school administrators answered “yes,” and one answered “no” to question two.

Many participants in the study spoke about how charter schools are not held to the same standards as public schools but still receive money from the state. Charter schools initially were experimentations in the most difficult areas of the country to educate the population (Palardy et al., 2015). In 2014, Pearson, through the Connections Academy, earned over \$948 million in revenue, which shows education has become a big business for corporations (Bausell, 2016). Education is supposed to be about teaching the nation’s children, but the business of schooling, to some, has turned into a money grab (Raam, 2016). The discussion in politics today is whether corporations or companies can educate

children better than public schools (Casey, 2015). The problem with this mindset is that companies need to make money for the company or stockholders (Casey, 2015).

Missouri has had charter schools for 18 years, and the schools require a sponsor, usually a university. When Missouri public schools fail, the state takes them over, but when charter schools fail, the sponsor gets revoked (Taketa, 2017). Charter schools make up 30% of the public-school students in St. Louis (Taketa, 2017).

Confluence Academy has been in St. Louis for 18 years and has failed to meet state standards for 15 years; a Missouri public school would have been taken over by the state if the school had the same test scores (Taketa, 2017). This is just one example of the failure of charter schools in Missouri; the 2016 data showed 11 of the 39 charter schools in Missouri would be provisionally accredited, and six would be deemed unaccredited (Taketa, 2017). That means 46% of charter schools in Missouri are not meeting the minimum requirements set forth by the state (Taketa, 2017).

Research question three. Of school administrators, 14 answered “no,” and four answered “maybe” to question three. Administrators from small schools answered question three with a ratio of seven “no” and two “yes,” as did the administrators from large schools. The state legislators had a different point of view. Three Republican legislators answered “no” to question three, and one answered “yes.” Three Democratic legislators also answered “no” to question three, and one answered “maybe.”

Education is complex, and that complexity makes it difficult to educate all students with one idea or curriculum because wants and needs are different in different areas of the nation (Berliner & Glass, 2015). Nearly all school personnel, parents, and students know there is large variability among teachers; this discussion is rarely heard.

Hence the politics of distraction are often invoked to avoid asking difficult questions (Hattie, 2015). Instead of making better teachers, the U.S. reform strategy has been to increase standards, assessments, monitoring, interventions, and development (Fullan, 2011).

Research question four. Question four was answered “no” by all Republican legislators who participated in the interview, while Democratic legislators differed in their answers with one answering “maybe,” two “yes,” and one “no.” Superintendents from large schools also had varied answers; four answered “yes,” three answered “no,” and one answered “maybe.” Once the ESEA was signed into law, the federal government became involved in the day-to-day operation of public schools (Jennings, 2015). Until 1965, the federal government had intruded minimally, but the ESEA changed all of that (Jennings, 2015). Since the signing of the law, federal government involvement in education has increased dramatically, with Head Start and Title I direct descendants of the ESEA (Hanna, 2005). Even though the federal government has spent billions of dollars on helping low-income families, the achievement gap has not closed for low-income students (Ladson-Billings, 2015).

Overall, school administrators were more receptive to uniform national standards than were state legislators. One school administrator stated, “Give us what the kids need to know, and let our teachers teach them.” This statement helps show the willingness of school administrators to be on board with some national standards, as long as there is freedom given to teachers to teach the best way they deem fit. Another school administrator said, “We do need a baseline to work from.”

This is another example of the willingness of educators to accept some form of national standards. Other administrators were against the idea of uniform national standards. One administrator (large schools) stated, “I want local control; things are changing so fast, it is hard for everyone to keep up from year to year.”

Implications for Practice

The confirmation attained through this investigation indicated opinions vary widely on the nature of federal government involvement in education. Even though education is big business, there is a scarce amount of resources competing interests fight over (Albino, 2013). Politics is a messy and complicated game where egos are involved, as is the lack of decision making for fear of not being re-elected (Hall, 2013). School administrators seem more willing to accept some sort of national standards than are state legislators. This may be due to the political frameworks involved with the state legislators.

It is the conclusion of the primary investigator that political party affiliation had some effect on the belief systems of the participants interviewed. This affiliation runs deep in today’s politics and may be difficult to overcome. School administrators, no matter what the size of the school, had a different outlook. They talked about doing what is best for the students; some believed complete local control was best for the students, and others were receptive to the idea of uniform national standards and school accountability.

Findings from the study offer more than a few implications for both administrative and legislative practice. Administrative interview data could be used to inform legislative decisions for public schools. Data from the study clearly illustrate

public school administrators favor funding for preschool education yet do not support charter school expansion. Bipartisan conversations among stakeholders may offer common ground on these topics for the benefit of Missouri students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Other questions emerged through analysis of the research data. More research should be conducted on the similarities and differences between state legislators' and school administrators' opinions on federal government involvement in education. Ideas which could be researched include the following:

1. Federal Title I money is looked upon as a positive because of the benefit it brings to early childhood education. However, these funds are being used for early childhood education because Missouri does not fund early childhood education completely. Research on how Title I money could be used if school districts were entirely financed by the Missouri mandates should be conducted, and the benefits of that funding should be studied.
2. Is there common ground for both Democrats and Republicans with perceptions involving federal government involvement in education? That question needs to be asked and researched further.
3. School administrators need to be questioned on the depth of Uniform National Standards, as responses varied greatly amongst them. Nonetheless, for the sample who were for Uniform National Standards, a common ground needs to be established so legislators and administrators can move forward with this idea.
4. The effectiveness of charter schools in Missouri needs to be examined. This topic has been researched nationally, but not researched in depth in Missouri.

5. Has federal government involvement in education helped educate the children of the United States? This would need to be relative to other nations since the late 1960s.

6. The Missouri Learning Standards are very similar to the Common Core State Standards. Research needs to be conducted on the beliefs of each set of standards, and if there is a change in mindset simply because it looks like there are more state and local controls.

Summary

There are relatively few studies of the views of school administrators and state legislators regarding federal government mandates over schools. This study will help shed light on the thought processes of both the school administrators who implement federal mandates and of the state legislators who navigate funding for federal mandates.

There are conceptual frameworks which drive the epistemological or ontological assumptions of leaders within an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2015). The political frame has common issues with finance the foremost concern (Hellsten et al., 2013). There exist factions in the political world which require administrators to develop a voice with politicians to avoid being discounted by special interest groups who seek allocation of educational funding (Hall, 2013). Power is the main component of the political framework, but how power develops and grows varies (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Political change may begin at the grassroots level or at a more executive level (Bolman & Deal, 2013). People align themselves to survive and thrive in the political framework (Douglas & Mehra, 2015). One of the key assumptions to this framework is that an organization has skilled people, yet it also has special interest groups (Pourrajab & Ghani, 2016). Resources are scarce in the political framework, and the aspects of

power and conflict cause very tense and divergent decisions to be made (Pourrajab & Ghani, 2016). Bolman and Deal (2013) identified nine different sources of power that exist in organizations: coercive power, reward control, reputation, personal, network or alliance, expertise, network, framing, and agenda.

For this study, the primary investigator interviewed leaders of the political parties of Missouri and school administrators to gain insight into the motivation and political views which drive decision making at the state and local levels. Bolman and Deal's (2015) political frame views a world of competing interests in which "conflict is a central process, and power is the critical source" (p. 38). An investigation of whether perceptions align regarding federal mandates may lend insight to this conflict for Missouri school leaders. Lyon et al. (2014) stated this is important as schools experience decreased funding. According to MTBI Basics, "Given the different personality types and operational styles of any school's stakeholders, the consensus around how to achieve curriculum improvement, or whether the improvement is even necessary, remains an ongoing discussion" (as cited in Lyon et al., 2014, p. 43).

Appendix A

LINDENWOOD

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

DATE: September 18, 2016

TO: Roger Woods

FROM: Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: [949065-1] The Perceptions of Decision Makers Involvement in Education

IRB REFERENCE #:

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: September 18, 2016

EXPIRATION DATE: September 18, 2017

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this research project. Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the completion/amendment form for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of .

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

If you have any questions, please contact Theodore Cohen at (636) 949-4817 or tcohen@lindenwood.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

If you have any questions, please send them to IRB@lindenwood.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board's records.

Appendix B

Lindenwood University
School of Education
 209 S. Kingshighway

St. Charles, Missouri 63301

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

“The Perceptions of Decision Makers Regarding Federal Government Involvement in
 Education”

Primary Investigator Roger Allen Woods Jr.

Telephone: 417- [REDACTED] E-mail: awoods@lindenwood.edu

Participant _____ Contact info _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Roger Woods under the guidance of Dr. Julie Williams. The purpose of this research project is to investigate the perspectives state legislators and school superintendents hold regarding federal government involvement in education.
2. a) Your participation will involve:
 - A phone interview with the primary investigator (Roger Woods).
 b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be 10 to 15 minutes. Approximately 30 participants will be involved in this research.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about school administrators and state legislator’s perspectives regarding federal government involvement in education.
5. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study, and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, 417-██████████ or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Julie Williams at 417-256-6150 EXT 4150. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name

Signature of Principal Investigator Date

Investigator Printed Name

Appendix C
Interview Questions

1. What are your beliefs about Federal Title I preschool for children from low- and moderate-income families?

2. What are your beliefs about federal legislation which supports charter schools?

3. What are your beliefs regarding measures for school accountability imposed by the federal government?

4. How do you feel about the use of uniform national standards?

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Vita

Roger Allen Woods Jr. graduated from Springfield Glendale in Springfield, Missouri, in 1990. After high school, Roger continued his education at Southwest Missouri State University at Springfield, Missouri, earning a Bachelor's Degree in Social Science in 1999. He then pursued a Masters of Education in School Administration from Southwest Baptist University at Bolivar, Missouri, earning his degree in 2007. He obtained his Education Specialist in Administration Degree from Arkansas State University in 2015.

Roger has spent 17 years in public education teaching several subjects and coaching numerous sports. For the past 3 years, Mr. Woods has served as the superintendent for Ripley County R-III School District.