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Barriers in Meeting the Needs of Special Education Students: A Qualitative Case Study

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BARRIERS IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

by

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BARRIERS IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Special education students' needs are not consistently being met in special education programs. This qualitative single case study explored special education programs based on a county education program serving multiple school districts in Northern California. The qualitative approach was selected to explore and identify potential themes in special education programs affecting special education students' needs not being met consistently. There were 14 themes found in this study, which appeared to be potential barriers impacting students' needs from being met consistently. The study utilized both a theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. There were 8 recommendations provided to help this educational agency begin to address these barriers within their special education programs. A leadership model was developed to help the educational agency identify a defined leadership style to use in their special education programs. Additionally, educational leaders in the United States could use these findings to begin evaluating special education programs.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to all students' with disabilities continuing to be under served in the United States education system and being rejected throughout the world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge everyone that has supported and encouraged me throughout this dissertation process. I completed this dissertation by keeping this scripture in the forefront of my mind: “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer, Romans 12:12 NIV.”

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1642, educational supervision began at Massachusetts Law School (Daresh, 2001; O'Callaghan, 2013). During 1642-1865, supervisors inspected classrooms to determine the wrong things teachers' did in the classroom (Daresh, p. 4, 2001). The inspector approach was not effective and supervisory practices were divided into two groups (Daresh, 2001). The two groups addressed religious control and secular involvement (Daresh, 2001). Religious control in schools was rejected during the American Revolution and education supervisors were expected to enforce the quality of secular instruction (Daresh, 2001). Educational supervision has evolved to focus on overall school performance minus religious control (Daresh, 2001).

Chapter 1 is to introduce the general and specific problem in the case study. The general problem is special education students' needs are not being met in all special education programs consistently. Merriam (2009) explains how to select a topic based on one's own personal interest in the field or from a specific work setting. This study was conducted based on the researcher's own personal interest working in the field of special education. Educational supervision in special education is the specific problem for this research. Special education administrators are responsible to ensure the educational rights of students with disabilities (IDEA, 1997). Currently, minimal research about special education administrators' supervision skills exists, which is one of the objectives of this exploratory study.

Background of the Problem

Special education administrators must develop free and appropriate public education programs for students with disabilities (Turnbull, Huerta, Stowe, Weldon, Schrandt, 2009; IDEA, 2004). Special education programs are facing legislative changes and federal regulation

requirements related to academic performance due to *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) 2001* regulations (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Currently, the US Department of Education (2014) is attempting to re-authorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) because the NCLB was not effective. The implementation of federal education regulations is a requirement of all educational administrators, including special education administrators (US Department of Education, 2014). The NCLB Act (2001) requires special education programs to be aligned with the education, training, and curriculum standards that are the same as general education requirements.

Special education programs are regulated and monitored by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) (2004). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB is not aligned with IDEA, which is a primary concern for special education educators (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Student achievement for special education students is measured by goals and objectives developed in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (Turnbull, Huerta, Stowe, Weldon, Schrandt, 2009; IDEA, 2004). Special education programs are designed to teach students with disabilities in an individualized program (Osborne & Russo 2014;Westling & Fox, 2004). Teacher performance is a requirement of NCLB based on student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Special education administrators implement poor evaluation methods to determine teacher performance, which is a requirement of the NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The general problem is special education students' needs are not being met in all programs in the United States.

Educational leaders in the United States shift focus to accountability and reliability based on standardized test scores, which are low compared to students' performance in other countries (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Special education students struggle with academics,

which require alternate assessment methods (Sarat, 2010; Lewis & Doorlag, 2006). Leaders of the California Department of Education developed an alternate assessment method called California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) (California Department of Education, 2014). Special education administrators must enforce that all students' with disabilities be included in standardized assessments (US Department of Education, 2014). NCLB requires leaders of school systems to implement standardized testing for all students, including students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Educational policymakers are attempting to measure academic achievement through standardized test scores to hold leaders of U.S. school systems accountable for student performance including students with disabilities.

IDEA requires special education programs to provide equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities (Turnbull, Huerta, Stowe, Weldon, Schrandt, 2009; IDEA, 2004). Special education students have an individualized education plan (IEP) with goals and objectives to measure student progress (Turnbull, Huerta, Stowe, Weldon, Schrandt, 2009; IDEA, 2004). The case study explored how special education administrators are monitoring the implementation of IDEA and IEP regulations. IDEA was developed to protect the civil rights of students with disabilities to ensure the educational needs be met (Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, 2014). Special education administrators' role is to enforce IDEA regulations in all special education programs.

Leaders of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) provide leadership to ensure all people with disabilities receive full integration and participation in American society (OSERS, 2014). Supports and services are developed and provided to people with disabilities to allow them equal access to society (OSERS, 2014). Leaders of OSERS monitor the development and implementation of supports and services to people with disabilities

(2008). The purpose of certain laws such as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997, The Rehabilitation Act (Rehab Act) of 1973, The Education of the Deaf Act (EDA) of 1965, Act to Promote Education of the Blind of 1879, The Helen Keller National Center Act of 1969, The Assistive Technology Act 2004, and The Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1954 is to authorize OSERS leaders to monitor supports and services for students with disabilities (OSERS, 2014). OSERS does not directly supervise special education programs in the United States, which appears to result in a lack of supervision at the federal level in education.

The current qualitative case study's goal was to explore the supervision in special education programs. Supervision in education focuses on the overall school performance (Daresh, 2001). The overall school performance includes academic achievement, teacher performance, and standardized assessment scores (US Department of Education, 2009). Special education administrators are responsible to protect the educational rights of disabled students by ensuring all special education programs are implementing IDEA regulations and other federal education regulations.

Statement of the Problem

Special Education administrators, personnel, and parents have expressed concern about how special education programs are currently operating in school systems (Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, 2008). Special education programs are regulated and monitored by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) (2004*).* The No Child Left Behind Act 2001 is not aligned with IDEA, which is a primary concern for special education educators (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The general problem is special education administrators are not meeting the needs of disabled students (Disability Rights Education and

Defense Fund, 2014). The specific problem was to explore how special education administrators are supervising the implementation of IDEA and other federal education regulations.

Student achievement for special education students is measured by goals and objectives developed in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (Turnbull, Huerta, Stowe, Weldon, Schrandt, 2009; IIDEA, 2004). Special education programs are designed to teach students with disabilities in an individualized program (Osborne & Russo 2014;Wrestling and Fox, 2004). Teacher performance is a requirement of NCLB based on student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Special education administrators implement poor evaluation methods to determine teacher performance, which is a requirement of the NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The assumed general problem based on experience, was special education students' needs are not being met in all programs in the United States because of a lack of supervision in the implementation of IDEA and other federal regulations by special education administrators.

Supervision, programming, training, and experience within special education were explored throughout the case study. Taped interviews and questionnaires were used to explore the professional experiences of five special education administrators, five special education teachers, five service providers, five paraeducators, and five parents. The experiences shared by the sample group showed how special education administrators supervise special education programs. The information gathered in this case study might help develop innovative approaches to meeting the needs of special education students'. Educational leaders can also use the case study to help improve special education programs in the United States.

Purpose of the Study

The qualitative single case study explored special education programs based on a school district in Northern California. The single case study method was appropriate because collected through the words of administrators and other special education employees of the organization explored. Audio taped interviews and questionnaires were used as primary forms of data collection tools. The results discovered by using a single case study design may allow special educators to improve supervision in special education management. The research questions helped to gain a better understanding about supervision by special education administrators (Shank, 2006; Yin, 2014).

Significance of the Study

Good supervision skills are essential to becoming an educational leader (Daresh, 2001; Zepeda, 2014). Effective administration should include proactive leadership and supervision (Daresh, 2001; Zepeda, 2014). Educational leaders are attempting to be proactive by developing educational policies to improve academic performance of all students (US Department of Education, 2009). Parents, students, and educators are expecting effective leadership and supervision by administrators in all education programs.

An educational leader must learn how to supervise effectively in order to build a strong educational program (Gabor & Muenier, 1993; Zepeda, 2014). Effective supervision allows a leader to anticipate the need for improvement or progression within their educational programs (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2007). The need for improvement and progression are areas of great concern in education. Educators must be prepared to make changes and to excel in new instructional strategies (Glickman et al., 2007). Educational leaders develop the vision to teach curriculum effectively to students who meet federal and state regulations (Choi, 2011;

Gabor & Muenier, 1993). Learning how to implement effective supervisory skills may improve all educational programs (Glickman et al., 2007). The members of the education community have limited information about supervision in special education, so this topic needs was explored. Researching special education was to explore disabilities and crises to develop programs or treatments for disabled students. Special educators must appreciate how to improve on the management of their programs. The goal of the discipline of education is to teach people to become life-long learners; so developing strategies to improve educational programs may be an asset to the education community. Exploring special education administrators' supervisory skills may help improve special education programs (Shank, 2006; Yin, 2014).

Significance of the Study to Leadership

Society could benefit from understanding the educational deficits and gaps in special education (OSERS, 2014; U.S. Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation, 2007). Special education students receive isolated and individualized instruction as a part of the curriculum design (IDEA, 2004). The services are paid through special education funding separate from general education funding (California Department of Education, 2014).

Educational leaders may learn how to improve special education programs in school systems. Inclusion and integration programs in school systems are a requirement for special education students (Campbell, 2010; Westling & Fox, 2004). General education and special education teachers are not receiving training on how to integrate or include special education students appropriately. Limited or no training may exclude special education students from the general education curriculum, access to which is a requirement of free and appropriate education (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Nature of the Study

The qualitative single case study explored possible problems with supervision of special education programs by special education administrators in one Northern California County. The qualitative approach was selected to explore and identify potential themes in special education supervision affecting special education students' needs not being met consistently. Qualitative methods rely on the perspectives of the participants, asking broad questions, collecting data on the words of the participants, and then describing and analyzing the words for themes (Creswell, 2005; Merriam 2009). Special education administrators and other participants may provide perspectives on supervision in special education programs.

Quantitative approach was not selected because the goal of the study was to explore the perspectives of special education supervision. The case study measured the overall performance of special education administrators. Quantitative method emphasizes collecting numeric data, scoring, and measuring the specific variables to test a hypothesis (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Using a quantitative approach requires specific research and data that is measurable and observable (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Special education administrators' supervisory skills were explored to provide information to educators about the leadership in special education. The information collected from the case study can be used for quantitative studies in the future focusing on the supervision skills of special education administrators.

The case study population group was a special education department serving one Northern California County, which includes multiple districts. The special education administrators include one special education director and four special education principals. The special education teachers varied by gender, experience, grade level, and skill. The service providers were occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, nurses, and

behavior intervention specialists. The paraeducators vary by gender, grade level, and experience. The parent participants vary by child's disability, parent involvement, education, and child's grade level.

The qualitative single case study explored possible problems with supervision of special education programs by special education administrators. The sample selected allows the collection of information from specific stakeholders within a special education program. The sample group was accessible and met the criteria of the subjects described to explore the specific problem (Creswell, 2005; Yin, 2014). The sample was selected to explore the perceptions of the problem.

These data collection types were audiotaped interviews and questionnaires through a pilot study (Creswell, 2005; Yin, 2014). The pilot study included one participant from each sample group, such as one administrator, one teacher, one service provider, one paraeducator, and one parent. The pilot participants responded to 15 interview questions pertaining to the specific problem identified. The interview questions were developed to include how each stakeholder perceived special education administrators supervision. The interview questions were validated in the pilot study. The interview questions would be modified if necessary during the pilot study. The objective of the interview questions were to triangulate the perceptions of the specific stakeholders about supervision by special education administrators and the effects on special educations students' needs.

These data were analyzed using the NVivo software and identified themes in the interview questions related to supervision, management, and evaluation skills. The themes interpreted the perceptions explored about supervision in special education programs. Leadership theories and supervision models were integrated into the themes found in the interview question

responses. The results are presented by listing the participant responses to the interview questions.

Research Questions

The research questions provided a foundation about supervision by special education administrators in one Northern California County. The research questions were investigated through participants' perceptions about the concept. The research questions explored how special education administrators' can improve their supervisory skills. Improving supervisory skills of special education administrators may help reform special education programs and possibly align with general education programs. Education is focusing more on accountability, which requires special education administrators to be effective leaders and supervisors (US Department of Education, 2009). Researching how the special education administrators' supervise and implement education regulations provides more opportunities to improve special education programs.

Below are the research questions:

RQ 1. How are barriers impacting special education programs?

RQ 2. How are special education administrators using the current supervision model?

RQ 3. How are special education administrators utilizing leadership and change models?

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Merriam (2009) describes theoretical framework as an inductive way of building rather than testing concepts, hypotheses, or theories. The theory in this study is special education students' needs are not being met because of barriers impacting special education programs. The barriers included supervision, management style, and leadership models. McMillian and Schumacher (2014) describes conceptual framework as a conception or model of the study. In this study will research the supervision of special education programs by special education administrators. This concept is minimally researched, which appears to be a new phenomenon of research. The study uses both a theoretical and conceptual framework to explore potential barriers impacting special education students' needs not being met consistently.

The conceptual framework of the study outlines the understanding how special education administrators' supervise special education programs. The theoretical framework included an exploration of leadership theories, change theories, learning theories, educational reform, management, and supervision. Leadership theories explored different styles of leadership used by special education administrators. Change theories discuss ways special education administrators can improve special education programs.

Change theories allowed special education administrators' the ability to improve special education programs. Organizational change is needed to implement educational reform (Kezar, 2001). Change theories could improve the overall leadership and supervision of special education administrators. Special education administrators may need innovative approaches to improve their supervisory skills, by using change theories.

Leadership was one concept explored to identify how special education administrators supervise special education programs. Educational reform describes current educational policies

paired with IDEA regulations. Management and supervision provided specific information about the current role and responsibilities of special education administrators.

Evidence-based practices are the focus in special education (CEC, 2014; Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2012; Cook, Tankersley, and Webb, 2008). Improving academic performance of all students through accountability is an educational reform in the United States (US Department of Education, 2009). Academic performance of all students includes students with disabilities. Evidence-based practices in special education involve a variety of considerations to improve academic performance (CEC, 2014; Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2012; Cook et al., 2008).

The considerations of evidence-based practices in special education are learning needs and goals of students, professional strengths of the special educator, educational environment, monitoring student progress, and engaging in effective teaching (CEC, 2014; Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2012; Cook et al., 2008). The learning needs and goals of special education students must include multiple instructional strategies (CEC, 2014; Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2012; Cook et al., 2008). Special education administrators should expect special education teachers to be trained on a variety of instructional approaches (CEC, 2014; Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2012; Cook et al., 2008). The professional strengths of the special educator focus on teacher education and training in special education (CEC, 2014; Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2012; Cook et al., 2008). Special education administrators are responsible for ensuring the teacher quality in their classrooms (US Department of Education, 2009). The educational environment provides special educators with the resources, structure, and support to instruct special education students (Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2012; Cook et al., 2008). Special education administrators must provide specific supports and services for special educations students (Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2012; Friend, 2011). IDEA regulations require special education programs to monitor student progress (Torres, Farley, &

Cook, 2012; Friend, 2011). Special education administrators ensure student progress is reported accurately by special education teachers (Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2012; Friend, 2011. Effective teaching is based on how the information is presented to the students (Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2012; Cook et al., 2008). Special education teachers are trained in a variety of instructional methods, which helps them become effective teachers (Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2012; Friend, 2011). Evidence-based educational practices considerations in special education are a current trend for educational reform (Torres, Farley, & Cook, 2012; Cook et al., 2008).

Educational reform is currently driven by the NCLB policy (US Department of Education, 2009). The educational leaders in the United States are attempting to improve academic performance by holding school systems accountable (US Department of Education, 2009). Teacher quality is one tenet of the NCLB policy to uphold accountability (US Department of Education, 2009). Special education teachers must be given the same access to training and certification as general education teachers to improve teacher quality (US Department of Education, 2014). Special education administrators are responsible for implementing NCLB regulations aligned with IDEA regulations (US Department of Education, 2014).

NCLB and IDEA regulations are currently being aligned (US Department of Education, 2009). The alignment of the policies may ensure students with disabilities the right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) (Friend, 2006; Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2012). Special education administrators' role is to implement and monitor students' IEPs has to comply with FAPE (Friend, 2006; Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2012). FAPE is an essential part of the IDEA regulations to ensure equal access to the general education curriculum and activities (Friend, 2006; Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2012). Special education administrators are responsible for providing equal access to the general education programs for students with

disabilities (Friend, 2006; Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2012). The research shows a need for evidence-based practices to be implemented in special education programs to promote educational reform (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Evidence-based practices, considerations, and educational reform are the basic components of the conceptual framework. Leadership theories, change theories, learning theories, educational reform, management, and supervision guided the overall research of the case study. Exploring the supervision skills of special education administrators in one Northern California County may be the beginning of improving special education programs. Special education programs need reform and supervision is necessary to make effective changes.

Definition of Terms

The definition of terms provided a brief description of terminology used throughout the research study. The words defined were used in both special education and general education. Members of the sample population frequently refer to and use these words when developing individualized education plans for disabled students. Research words are defined to describe various methods used for data collection for the study. The terms are listed below.

CAPA: The California Alternate Performance Assessment used to measure academic progress of special education students based on a standardized assessment tool (California Department of Education, 2014).

Dialectical: Schunk (2004, p. 238) stated, "knowledge derives from interactions between the persons and their environment."

Disability: A physical or mental impairment (Americans with Disabilities Act, 2005; Disability.gov, 2014).

Endogenous: Schunk (2004) described endogenous perspective as "knowledge derives from previously acquired knowledge and not directly from environmental interactions." (p. 238).

Exogenous: means an "acquisition of knowledge represents a reconstruction of the external world," according to Schunk (2004, p. 238).

Equal access: The act of giving special education students the same access to education as students in the general education population (IDEA, 2014).

FAPE: A free and appropriate public education (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Full integration: The act of placing a special education student into a general education classroom and providing special education services to accommodate and modify the individualized education program (Friend, 2011).

General education: "represents a commitment to common educational experiences and the learning of common skills, knowledge, and values" (Hlebowitsh, 2005, p. 125).

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 1997 (IDEA, 2014).

IEPs: Individualized Education Programs are designed to meet the needs of a special education student measured by specific goals and objectives (Friend, 2011).

Inclusion: "term used to describe the education of students with disabilities in general education settings" (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004, p. 7).

Paraeducators: "educators who work under the direction of a teacher or another professional to help in the delivery of services for students with disabilities" (Friend, 2006, p. 50)

Site principal: A special education administrator supervising and managing specific special education programs and staff at designated sites.

Special education: "specifically designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of individuals with exceptional needs, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in

the home, in hospitals and institutions, and other settings, and instruction in physical education" (California Education Code 56031, Part 30, Ch.1, Article 2, 2014)

Special education director: The senior director of all special education programs and staff of an agency.

Special education students' needs: supports and services identified in the IEP to address the students' cognitive, social-emotional, and developmental levels to achieve academic success.

Assumptions

The qualitative single case study explored the supervision in special education programs. The qualitative method involves subjective information leading to bias (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Merriam, 2009). Because subjective information may cause misinterpretation of the data collected, the data must be coded to avoid bias because of human error (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Merriam, 2009). The coding system was used described each participant's perspectives minimizing bias. The NVivo software interpreted and analyzed the data. These data were analyzed based on the words of the participants for exploratory research. The perspectives of the participants shared improvements needed in supervision for special education programs.

The participants in the study shared subjective information based on perspectives of roles in special education. The differing roles affected the way they respond to questions. Special education administrators may not reveal weaknesses in supervision. Special education teachers may disclose minimal information about teaching performance. Support providers may be open to discussing management supervision, evaluation, and teacher performance. Parents may express personal experiences about the administration, teachers, and support services affecting the problem statement negatively or positively. The assumptions lead the research to understanding the differences in the subgroups' perspectives of special education supervision.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study encompassed supervision, management, and evaluation performed by special education administrators. The general problem explored why special education students' needs are not being met in all special education programs. Special education administrators are responsible for overseeing the implementation of individualized education programs (Friend, 2011). The specific problem described how are special education administrators supervising special education programs. Needs analysis assessment determined the importance and relevance of special education supervision to meeting the needs of special education students.

A needs analysis assessment used analyzed the data while the study was used to explore organizational performance and educational training. A gap analysis conducted determined the gap in services provided to special education students. The priorities and importance of the needs identified in the research method. The causes of performance problems were identified to explore the current supervision, management, and evaluation methods used by the sample.

Special education students being instructed by teachers not trained in specific evidence-based instructional strategies per NCLB regulations may be issue special education administrators must address by supervision methods (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Explored supervision methods used by special education administrators may not be the most effective methods, which may warrant a need for using different supervisory methods. Special education administrators need to improve the teaching performance by special education teachers as a NCLB regulation (US Department of Education, 2009).

Additional training in supervision, evaluation, and management skills for special education administrators was identified during this study. Both supervisory and instructional

staff may require ongoing training in research-based educational strategies, behavior management, and physical intervention. Special education administrators' lack of skills may not be the only reason special education students' needs are not being met.

Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of the study included convenience-sampling, inability to locate specific research related to the specific problem, sample size, and refusal to conduct direct observations. Researcher was limited to utilize a sample group accessible to her. This was convenience to ensure the study can be conducted without a permission to use the premises. The sample group was all school personnel, but the Superintendent would not allow any interviews, questionnaires, and direct observations to be conducted on the school campus. This appeared to violate the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, 1996 (HIPAA) Practices and Special Education Confidentiality laws governed by California Department of Education and IDEA regulations (California Department of Education, 2014; US Department of Education, 2014; US Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). Literature review on the topic of the supervision skills of Special Education Administrators was not found within the literature search. The research was limited to other topics, theories, educational reforms, and skills that could be found within the literature review. These limitations may have impacted the study, but were not within the researcher's control.

The study delimitations included; no general education perspective, quantitative method not selected, no special education litigation issues researched, no assessment data researched, or IEP compliance data researched. General education perspectives were not included because the focus of the study was to receive direct information about special education from special education personnel. Qualitative method was selected to conduct an exploratory research, but not

to provide a proven issue in special education. Special education litigation issues have been extensively researched and did not provide a direct link to add value to this study conducted. Assessment data and IEP compliance data only provides specific information on rather assessments or IEP's were either conducted or written correctly versus being implemented. These delimitations may have impacted the outcome of the study.

Summary

Chapter 1 described the general and specific problem of this qualitative single case study. The study explored possible problems with supervision of special education programs by special education administrators. The significance of the study was to determine how educational leaders learn to improve special education programs in school systems. The nature of the study identifies the population and sample. The research questions provided the focus and relationship for the problem. The leadership and management theories were a conceptual framework to understand the role and responsibility of a special education administrator. Key terms used in special education were defined. The assumptions of the qualitative single case study were subjective, minimizing bias. The study was limited to the target population and the delimitations of the study focused on the participants' perception of supervision. The scope of the study included supervision, management, and evaluation performed by special education administrators. The purpose of the literature review in Chapter 2 linked research to the problem and illustrated the gap in literature related to the supervision skills of special education managers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A qualitative case study was introduced in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 addresses literature relating to presenting problems in the case study. The literature review linked the conceptual framework of leadership and supervision. The change theories described how special education managers implement change in supervision, management, and evaluation. Learning theories offer current instructional strategies used by the sample population in the study. Management skills, supervision, and evaluation characterized the principles of leadership. The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) impacts special education with the alignment of *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* 1997 (IDEA). Blueprint Reform and Common Core Standards focuses on current educational reforms being featured in the United States school system. Exploring leadership theories, change theories, and learning theories may demonstrate the need for change in the sample population's organization.

The qualitative single case study explored possible problems with supervision of special education programs by special education administrators. Special education administrators were the participants in the study and special education was the primary focus of the review of literature. Exploring various leadership theories helps to understand special education administrators' current supervision skills.

The specific problem was the supervision, management, and evaluation by special education administrators related to educational leadership. Exploring leadership theories requires describing historical thinking about effective leadership skills. The leadership theories researched is situational, contingency, strategic, transformational, and educational. These theories were selected because they are common leadership theories within the leadership

community. Change theories explored are Institutionalism, Population Ecology, Teleological, and learning theories. The learning theories are Social Learning, Cognitive, Experiential, Behavioral, Multiple Intelligences, Social Development, Gestalt, and Constructivism. The current evaluation methods within the study population was identified and related to research-based instructional methods. Locating information about the types of evaluation methods used in organizations can develop an understanding of the evaluation methods in the participants' organization. The evaluation methods described in the study helped to understand how effective the current supervision methods were with the selected special education administrators. The literature review provided detailed information about how special education administrators' leadership styles, implementation of federal educational methods, and how change theories may help them learn how to improve special education programs.

Literature Information Search

A literature information search was conducted within a specific timeframe. The uses of traditional and electronic data sources were explored to gather information. Community and University campus libraries are traditional data sources. Internet sources are electronic data sources, and such electronic data sources to be included in the review of literature are ERIC and the University of Phoenix online library. The types of data used include journals, books, and articles. The selection of sources must be scholarly and peer-reviewed. The information obtained reflected current and historical information related to leadership and supervision in special education programs. Below is a table representing the number of references selected by category:

Table 1

Summary of Major Database Results

Categories	Books	Articles	Other Sources
Leadership	8	10	0
Special Education	4	10	3
Education	9	6	5
Theory	12	10	0
Disability	0	0	4
Educational Law	0	2	7
Management	0	2	0
Supervision	1	1	0
Research	9	2	2
Total	**43**	**43**	**21**

Leadership Theories

Leadership theories enhanced the leadership skills of educational leaders. Leadership is developed through experience, education, and training (Fullan, 2013; Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2001). Leadership styles differ from those of other educational and an exploration of leadership theories can help understand the current leadership in special education. Members of special education programs are required to follow IDEA and NCLB regulations (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Leadership theories provided an understanding of supervision in special education programs.

Situational Leadership Model

The purpose of situational leadership theory is to focus on behavior and task performance (Papworth, Milne, & Boak, 2009; Norris & Vecchio, 1992). The three main features of

Situational Leadership are the leader, the follower, and the situation itself (Papworth, Milne, & Boak, 2009; Shriberg, Shriberg, & Lloyd, 2002). Situational factors include the task, authority system, and work group (Papworth, Milne, & Boak, 2009; Shriberg et al., 2002). Supervision changes are made based on the level of maturity of the employee (Papworth, Milne, & Boak, 2009; Norris & Vecchio, 1992). A worker has the ability to mature over the course of their task performance may require a change in the level of supervision (Papworth, Milne, & Boak, 2009; Norris & Vecchio, 1992). The supervisor is more confident in allowing the worker to be independent in their tasks when they appear mature (Papworth, Milne, & Boak, 2009; Norris & Vecchio, 1992). The situational determinant of leaders' behavior is the task-relevant maturity of the employees (Papworth, Milne, & Boak, 2009; Graeff, 1983). Job maturity is determined by the employee's ability to perform the job independently (Papworth, Milne, & Boak, 2009; Shriberg et al., 2002). Leadership skills needed for mature employees include the ability to identify the level of maturity, diagnose situations, and make appropriate decisions related to the task and employee requirements (Papworth, Milne, & Boak, 2009; Shriberg et al., 2002).

Contingency Leadership Model

The Contingency Leadership theory differs from the situational leadership theory. In this model, the leaders are more consistent in how they respond to employees being less flexible (Waters, 2013; Hughes et al., 2001). In this case, the leader's style and leadership situation depend on leadership effectiveness (Waters, 2013; Hughes et al., 2001). One style of leadership may appear to be more flexible, thus allowing time for growth and teaching, whereas the other is contingent on performance and production. Contingency theory may appear to be similar to situational theory because the leadership style in this theory is based on situational factors. The

difference between the two is that in contingency theory, the leadership styles are changed in the setting, but in situational theory, there is no shift in leadership style.

Strategic Leadership

According to Locke and Tarantino (2006), the purpose of the strategic leadership model is to promote learning and focus on future needs and long-term results. The model has four components, including assessment, alignment, application, and achievement. The assessment component allows leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of their leadership style. The alignment component means the leader aligns his or her goals with the people's goals. The application component is used to measure the progress of the goals. The achievement component is used to determine the actual progression of the goals after they have been assessed, aligned, and applied. Strategic leaders strive to develop their leadership skills through assessment, alignment, application, and achievement to ensure the success of their overall organization (Carter & Greer, 2013).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is an innovative leadership style used by leaders (Mason, Griffin, & Parker, 2014). Bass (1999) described transformational leadership as a leader with the ability to move followers through immediate self-interests, such as inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration. Bass believed a transformational leader would motivate a follower through using ideas of self-actualization (Mason, Griffin, & Parker, 2014). The self-actualization technique is similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Feist and Feist (2006) discussed Maslow's hierarchy of needs as being used often within the field of psychology and counseling. Maslow's theory described the interactions of transformational leaders and followers' similar therapeutic relationships. The approach to leadership allows the leader to

express empathy. The ability of a leader to express empathy to followers allows the leader to prepare for team innovations.

Innovations in leadership provide leaders with the ability to develop appropriate changes needed to manage a successful business. Transformational leaders used innovations to encourage followers into becoming leaders within their own roles (Mason, Griffin, & Parker, 2014; Yukl, 2006). Yukl (2006) described how transformational leaders build positive working relationships with followers. Kipp (2001) described how transformational leaders use innovation within the business process to develop an idea into a full-scale business plan with results. Kipp expressed how innovations in the business process begin from simple ideas and develop into an actual business plan. The innovative idea allows transformational leaders to experience various outcomes in leadership (Mason, Griffin, & Parker, 2014).

The outcomes from transformational leadership have allowed these leaders to be rewarded and successful. Krishnan (2005) described the two types of transformational leadership outcomes as cognitive and affective. The value system of the follower is related to the follower's personal beliefs and values as it relates to the organization. For example, special education students have the right to a free and appropriate public education (IDEA, 2004), and a follower helps the organization ensure equal educational access for special education students. The identification piece to this description of cognitive outcomes is explaining how followers identify themselves within the organization. The example of the special education follower would identify how special education administrators act as an advocate for special education students. Krishnan explained affective outcomes by discussing how some outcomes may be a result of emotions. Transformational leaders influence leaders through self-actualization, and having affective outcomes is directly related to this type of leader. For example, a transformational

leader may reflect or understand their follower's emotions, which can affect the leader's decisions or how they interact with the follower. Transformational leadership outcomes are organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Walumbwa, Wang, Lawler, and Shi (2004) described organizational commitment as a multidimensional construct. Walumbwa et al. stated organizational commitment has many dimensions. The authors defined organizational commitment as the ability to commit to the organization by following organization rules, regulations, directives, and completing all tasks (Mason, Griffin, & Parker, 2014;Walumbwa et al., 2004). Transformational leaders believe followers show commitment to the organization through charisma and inspiration (Mason, Griffin, & Parker, 2014;Walumbwa et al., 2004).

Educational Leadership

An educational leader must learn how to supervise to build a strong and effective educational program. Gabor and Meunier (1993) discussed how the work of an educational leader consists of effective management and continuous improvement of leadership systems. The purpose of leadership systems is to believe vision and values are communicated, shared, and actualized by members of an organization working together (Gabor & Muenier, 1993; Fullan, 2013). Supervision allows a leader to experience the need of improvement or progression within their educational programs (Gabor & Muenier, 1993; Fullan, 2013). The need for improvement and progression are areas of concern in education (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Educators must be prepared to make changes and to excel in new instructional strategies (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Educational leaders develop the vision and mission to achieve teaching curriculum to students who meet federal and state regulations (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Learning to implement effective supervisory skills by special education administrators can improve special education programs (Fullan, 2013; Hoy & Miskel, 2002).

Because members of the doctoral community may possess limited information about supervision in special education, the topic requires further exploration. Special educators should appreciate the value of improving supervision in special education. Developing effective supervision strategies to improve special education programs are an asset to the education community.

Situational, contingency, strategic, transformational, and educational leadership are leadership models explored for research about leadership. Leadership models described leadership styles displayed in the case study. The information gathered serves as the framework for the literature review. The objective of understanding different types of leadership models explored more effectively the possible concerns of the employees in the case study. Researching how the models influence the leadership styles of managers in the organization may give additional information about the problems found in the special education department.

Change Theories

Institutionalism, Population Ecology Theory, and Teleological are change theories to be defined and discussed to add information about organizational change needed in special education. The potential effects of using change theories described based on the view of the organization and individuals working within. Implementing change theories may reduce the negative effects and motivate staff to adapt or accept the change (Kezar, 2001). Evaluating trends in the population's organization may determine how organizational change affects special education programs. The population's organization is the education field and the organizational leaders may seek to minimize resistance to change.

Institutionalism

Institutional theorists focus on both why change occurs and on how change occurs (Marion, 2002; Schmidt, 2010). The *why* refers to the reason change occurs and the *how* refers to

the after effects of the change (Marion, 2002; Schmidt, 2010). Institutionalism theory is often used in many governmental agencies (Marion, 2002; Schmidt, 2010). Neo-institutionalists apply logic of rational choice institutionalism by people understanding how the public agencies design and evaluate domestic and national security policies (Durant, 2006; Schmidt, 2010). In the education organization, the theory framework is applied in various positions staff holds in the organization. In the special education programs a Behavior Intervention Specialists determine the function of a student's behavior. The Behavior Specialist supports the classroom by providing behavior services to help manage the students' behaviors, which is an example of institutional change in special education. Special education administrators must promote institutional change to implement educational reform.

Population Ecology Theory

Population ecology theory refers to understanding the decline or emergence of populations. Special education has a reputation of staff turnover (Salimath & Jones, 2011; Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1999). The population ecology theory is similar to U.S. Federal Government leaders' decision to fund education regulations. In NCLB, specific regulations exist about funding education based on school academic performance. Schools with students receiving high-test scores on standardized tests receive more funding than schools with low performing students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Special education programs receive separate funding to provide supports and services to students with disabilities (US Department of Education, 2014). Standardized assessments are used to determine the academic progress of all students, including students with disabilities (US Department of Education, 2009). Population ecology theory can help educational policymakers develop a funding system to improve academic achievement for all students including students with disabilities.

Teleological

Teleological change theory is based on organizational development. Organizational development focused on the first-order of change rather than the current organizational paradigms (Bekmeier-Feurerhahn, 2009; Kezar, 2001). The common names for teleological change theory are planned change, scientific management, and rational models (Bekmeier-Feurerhahn, 2009; Kezar, 2001). Change agents and leaders are the focus of the change process (Bekmeier-Feurerhahn, 2009; Kezar, 2001).

Special Education & Educational Reform Models

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA in 1997 was to strengthen academic expectations and accountability for children with disabilities (IDEA, 1997). The act protects the educational rights of disabled students offering free and appropriate public education (IDEA, 2004). IDEA is intended to govern the methods of each state and local public agency leaders in providing educational services to disabled students (IDEA, 2004). IDEA was reauthorized in 2004 and divided into two parts, B and C (IDEA, 2004). Part B focuses on students aged 3-21 and the purpose of Part C is to focus on the birth to two students (IDEA, 2004). The regulations of IDEA are specific for providing equal opportunities to disabled students (IDEA, 2004). Violations of the regulations may result in legal action against the leaders of the state or local public agencies providing services to disabled students (IDEA, 2004).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

In 2001, the NCLB was developed to obtain accountability in U.S. school systems (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The four pillars of NCLB include stronger accountability, more freedom for states and communities, proven education methods, and more choices for parents

(U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The focus of accountability is to close the achievement gap for all students in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Leaders of states and school districts have flexibility to use federal education funds to improve standardized test scores (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The proven education methods are research-based educational strategies, which are effective for students' learning and achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Parents have the right to select a high achieving school in their area versus being forced to attend a school in the neighborhood (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Special Education is defined as a program designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Friend, 2006) and has shifted in the last 10 years. Harr, Parrish, Chambers, Levin, and Segarra (2006) reported U.S. school leaders provide special education service to only one of five students with disabilities. Harr et al. (2006) is an example of the need for realignment of NCLB and IDEA regulations. NCLB requires additional educational standards and expectations for all educators, including classified staff (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The shift in special education has disrupted the status of effective individualized programs for students with disabilities due to the new requirements from NCLB 2001 (U.S. Department of Rehabilitation and Special Education, 2002). The primary need for special education programs is to provide more training to all staff members to align with new educational regulations (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). A developmental change in the school system allows special education programs to grow with changes made in public education (Friend, 2006). Students with disabilities did not meet the public education standards (Friend, 2006), and the Brown versus Board of Education case in Topeka, Kansas prompted the issue of separate classes for students with disabilities (Friend, 2006). Researchers explored the idea of separate classes through a

series of studies called efficacy studies (Friend, 2006). Litigation for the rights of students with disabilities began and policies were developed for these students (Friend, 2006).

NCLB is a recent educational reform in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Students in the United States are performing poorly on standardized tests, so educators and legislators are trying to develop many educational reforms to improve academic performance (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Leaders in special education are attempting to restructure the delivery of instruction to special education students to align with NCLB regulations (U.S. Department of Rehabilitation and Special Education, 2008). Restructuring the special education programs to align with NCLB, continuing to emphasize students' needs, and improving leadership/management skills are imperative (U.S. Department of Rehabilitation and Special Education, 2008). Two models, the Paideia Proposal and Site-based management (Weltman, 2002) explore the educational reform needs. Educational reform focuses on the improvement of academic performance.

Paideia Proposal

The Paideia Proposal is an educational reform model currently implemented in many educational programs (Adler, 1982; Gutek, 1998). Adler developed the Paideia Proposal, and supported socialism and developed a unique structure to improve education (Adler, 1982; Gutek, 1998). According to Weltman (2002), the purpose of the Paideia Proposal is to focus on the social influence of the curriculum, the social effects of various methodologies, and the social value of education achievement, rather than individual instruction and success. Adler's reform shifts from individual instruction to a cooperative learning model. Students learned from each other versus learning as an individual (Adler, 1982). The Paideia Proposal has 12 principles focusing on how children can learn in school. The 12 principles influence the three Paideia goals

of instruction, which include Socratic teaching, coaching sessions, and didactic instruction (Adler, 1982; Weiss, 2000). Socratic teaching occurs when the instructor teaches through seminars using many sources (Adler, 1982; Weiss, 2000). Coaching sessions focused on teaching students specific academic skills (Adler, 1982; Weiss, 2000). Didactic instruction teaches students how to recall information and facts (Adler, 1982; Weiss, 2000). The Paideia Proposal is an educational reform focusing on teaching all students with emphasis on socialism and cooperative learning (Adler, 1982; Weiss, 2000).

Site-based Management

Site-based management focuses on better decision-making in education (Lance & Hofschire, 2013; North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995). Leaders of the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (1995) described site-based management as increasing school autonomy and sharing decision-making with teachers, parents, students, and community members. Educational leaders make appropriate decisions meeting the needs of their students (Bernhardt, 2014;Stevenson, 2001). According to Stevenson (2001), school-based management involves a structural and vertical decentralization of decision-making authority from the state to the school, while shared decision-making represents a horizontal devolution of authority within the school, from the principal to a collective of members of the school community. The school board is representative of a format of site-based management (Stevenson, 2001). School board members are individuals of the community elected to assist in the decision-making and implementation of school policy (Stevenson, 2001). Educational leaders may develop relationships with these school board members (Stevenson, 2001). The relationships built between the school board members and educational leaders establish partnerships (Stevenson, 2001). Holloway (2000, p. 1) presented two conditions for site-based management, and the

conditions include people at the school site must have genuine authority over the budget, personnel, and curriculum and leaders must introduce changes that directly affect teaching and learning. Educational leaders are responsible for the school system budget, school personnel, and curriculum. School board members can monitor and supervise how these educational leaders operate the budget, supervise staff, and implement curriculum requirements. Gabor and Meunier (1993) stated an educational leader implements effective management and continuous improvement of leadership systems through leadership systems driven by vision and values. Educational leaders communicate and share the values and mission to followers (Bernhardt, 2014; Gabor & Muenier, 1993). Site-based management provides leadership influence and partnerships with community members (Hofschire, & Lance, 2013; Holloway, 2000).

Special Education and NCLB

The effects of NCLB are impacting the special education programs in school systems. One issue effecting special education is the expectation that disabled students take a standardized test at their grade level, even though they are not performing at their grade level. Most special education students are unable to perform on their grade level, but due to the NCLB testing standards, these students are forced to take the exam at their current grade level (Friend, 2006). Another issue involves special education teachers who typically teach multiple subjects at a secondary level must obtain a single subject credential in order to teach math, language arts, or science (US Department of Education, 2014).

The final issue concerning special education is funding. Typically, separate funding is provided to special education programs through the IDEA, an act developed to protect the civil and educational rights of disabled students (IDEA, 2004). According to Lipsky and Kerzner (2003), the purpose of IDEA is to authorize the use of special education funds for non-disabled

students and professional development for general education teachers who service special education students. The funding is to be used specifically in these terms, but a debate exists regarding whether leaders of school systems appropriately used these funds. The three effects of NCLB on special education are disabled students being forced to take standardized testing, special education teachers forced to obtain a single subject credential, and special education funds are being shared with general education population. Concerns over the effects of NCLB are prevalent and special educators are debating and fighting for changes.

Blueprint Reform and Common Core Standards

The Blueprint Reform was developed to align with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act 2009 (US Department of Education, 2010). There are four areas of need in education; improving teacher and principal effectiveness, providing information to families to help them ensure their child's quality of education, implementing college and career standards with improved assessments aligned with those standards, and providing more intensive supports for low performing schools (US Department of Education, 2010). The reform has five key priorities built to improve student achievement and be more college/career ready (US Department of Education, 2010). The five priorities are college/career ready students, great teachers/leaders in every school, equity and opportunity for all students, raise the bar and reward excellence, and promote innovation and continuous improvement (US Department of Education, 2010). The Blueprint Reform is being used as a supplemental to the NCLB Act paired with Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (US Department of Education, 2010). The Blueprint reform only has one paragraph describing how this reform addresses students with disabilities (US Department of Education, 2010). The paragraph describes how the reform assisted with improving teachers/leaders quality through better preparation, obtaining more accurately

measured assessments on students' performance, and by providing a higher quality curriculum using instructional supports (like Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (US Department of Education, 2010). Blueprint reform appears to minimally address special education improvements needed.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were developed with the Council of Chief State and School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) in 2009 (corestandards.org, 2014). These standards were developed because of inconsistent learning goals across the states in the United States (corestandards.org, 2014). The CCSS would serve to provide uniform standards across all states (corestandards.org, 2014). The standards align the knowledge and skills students should gain through K-12 (corestandards.org, 2014). The standards focus on two primary core standards; English Language Arts/Literacy and Math standards (corestandards.org, 2014). Each state is required to adopt the CCSS (corestandards.org, 2014). In 2010, California adopted the standards, but has not been fully implemented until the 2014-2015 school year (corestandards.org, 2014). Some states in the US have not adopted the CCSS and many have not began full implementation (corestandards.org, 2014). California Department of Education has provided informational resources, seminars, tutorials, and webinars to help schools begin the implementation process along with aligning the CCSS with special education regulations (California Department of Education, 2014). Special educators are facing challenges with implementing the CCSS with IEP's, curriculum, and assessments (Special Edge, 2014). The CCSS appears to be an effective set of standards to help improve students' academic achievement.

Learning Theories Paired with Special Education

Learning is a lifelong journey and many theorists explore how people learn. Understanding how people learn can help educational leaders improve teacher instruction and student achievement. Supervision helps build the foundation for effective teaching and learning. Special education administrators can apply learning theories to help improve the overall teacher and student performance in special education programs.

Learning theorists explored include Piaget (1970), Bandura (1977), Rogers (1951), Gardner (1983), Watson (1930), Vygotsky (1978), and Kohler (1947). The theorists focus on cognition, behavior, and social interactions. The development of learning theories derives from these theorists' work. The purpose of this paper is to explore the following theories as they relate to special education: Social Learning, Cognitive, Experiential, Behavioral, Multiple Intelligences, Social Development, Gestalt, and Constructivism. Learning strategies explained how people could learn. Theoretical approaches outlined the ways people can learn. Many theorists provide alternate approaches people can learn relating to behavior, environment, cognition, and social interaction. An eclectic approach to learning exists when working with special needs students. The students learn information in alternate methods due to their limitations with cognition, behavior, and social interactions. Environment can directly impact how people learn.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura (1977) is the founder of social learning theory, which focuses on the behaviors, emotional reactions, and attitudes of others. Bandura believed that people learn behaviors through observing the behaviors of others. A social environment includes rules, beliefs, skills, observations, and the acquisition of knowledge (Bandura, 1977). Bandura believed the way people interact socially determines the way they learn.

Social cognitive theory involves several key concepts about learning through observed behaviors (Bandura, 1977). The key concepts are reciprocal interactions, enactive and vicarious learning, and the distinction between learning and performance (Bandura, 1977). Reciprocal interactions occur when behavior changes as a result of interactions between the person and the environment (The Communication Initiative, 2003). Enactive and vicarious learning describes the actions and observations of the behaviors (Bandura, 2011; Bandura, 1977). Enactive learning is the actual doing of the behavior, according to Schunk (2004). Vicarious learning occurs when people learn behaviors through observations (Bandura, 2011; Schunk, 2004). For example, a student learns a script from a television show. The student observes the behavior, demonstrates the behavior, and practices the behavior, which constitutes as vicarious learning (Bandura, 2011; Schunk, 2004). Learning is observable and people performed what they learn through observation (Bandura, 2011; Schunk, 2004). Bandura's social learning theory concepts can be used to explain social interactions of special education students.

Some special education students have deficits in their ability to interact socially with people (Friend, 2011). The students may misbehave and are unable to regulate their emotions (Friend, 2011). Special education programs design social skills curriculum to address such needs (Friend, 2011). Bandura believed people learn through observing other's behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Special education inclusion and integration programs teach special education students how to learn appropriate behaviors from typically developing peers (Friend, 2011). Inclusion programs include both special education and general education students in one classroom for the entire school day (Friend, 2011). Integration programs allow special education students or general education students to integrate into a special education classroom or a general education classroom for specific activities (Friend, 2011). Special education students are learning how to

socially interact with their typically developing peers as their models (Friend, 2011). Social learning theory provides opportunities for special education students to learn appropriate social skills (Friend, 2011).

Cognitive Theory

Jean Piaget is known for his stages of cognitive development (Schunk, 2011). The purpose of cognitive development is to explore how people adapt to their environment (Schunk, 2011). Behaviors people use allow them to adapt within any environment encountered (Schunk, 2011). Piaget believed people learn how to adapt to environments through imitation of other's behaviors (Schunk, 2011). The cognitive development theory led to two processes of adaptation and four stages of cognitive development (Schunk, 2011).

The two processes of adaptation are assimilation and accommodation (Schunk, 2011;Slavin, 2006). Assimilation occurs when a person uses the information from the environment and applies it to preexisting information stored in their cognitive structures (Schunk, 2011;Slavin, 2006). An example of assimilation is a student from a suburban environment assimilating to an urban environment. The student is able to understand the environment and learned how to adapt within the new environment. Accommodation occurs when a person changes the preexisting information stored in the cognitive structures to receive new information obtained in the environment (Schunk, 2011;Slavin, 2006). For example, a student who is learning disabled needs more time to complete standardized testing. Such a scenario is an accommodation due to their disability. Assimilation and accommodation pertain to the four stages of cognitive development (Schunk, 2011;Slavin, 2006).

The four stages of cognitive development are sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational, and formal operational (Schunk, 2011). The sensorimotor stage occurs during the

infancy period of human development (Schunk, 2011). Infants explored their environment through their senses (Schunk, 2011). The pre-operational stage is during toddler and early childhood ages (Schunk, 2011). The stage occurs when toddlers and children up to age seven begin to understand their environment through words, images, and drawings (Schunk, 2011). Concrete operational stage is from ages seven to 11 (Schunk, 2011). Children are able to complete operational tasks and begin to understand reason logically (Schunk, 2011). Formal operational stage is from age 14 to adulthood (Schunk, 2011). The formal operational stage occurs when adolescents and adults appear to demonstrate their intelligence through logical use of symbols, which is abstract thinking (Schunk, 2011). The stages of cognitive development define how students learned based on their cognitive abilities and the environment (Schunk, 2011).

Special education students are cognitively delayed in specific areas of teaching (Friend, 2011). The students may appear to be in specific stages of cognitive development for long periods of time. For example, some students with autism do not have a normal sensory regulation system like their typically developing peers. Such a scenario means their senses are easily over or under stimulated. The students may appear to be in the sensorimotor stage of cognitive development because they are learning through their senses, but the problem with this student with autism is he or she may be past infancy and still in sensorimotor stage. Special educators are aware of the student's cognitive development, which requires assimilation and accommodation in the classroom environment to meet the needs of their students.

Experiential Theory

Carl Rogers is the originator of experiential learning theory (Beard & Wilson, 2013; Neill, 2006). Rogers is a psychotherapist who uses a humanistic approach to treat clients (Beard

& Wilson, 2013; Neill, 2006). According to Neill (2006), experiential learning theory is equivalent to personal change and growth. People learned through experiences within their environment, and experiential learning is taught through facilitation (Beard & Wilson, 2013; Neill, 2006).

Facilitation is an approach to teach experiential learning. Neill (2006) reported Rogers described how learning is facilitated (Neill, 2006). One form of facilitated learning occurs when a student is able to participate in the learning process and is able to control the outcome (Beard & Wilson, 2013; Neill, 2006). Another form of facilitation occurs when a student learned through direct confrontation with practical, social, personal, or research problems (Beard & Wilson, 2013; Neill, 2006). The other form occurs when a student is able to learn through self-evaluation (Beard & Wilson, 2013; Neill, 2006). Learning through facilitation helps students to understand what they can learn from their experiences.

Special education students can learn through their experiences. The students are able to respond when they experience reactions to their misbehaviors or cognitive development. For example, a student with Down's syndrome experiences a negative reaction when he or she licks objects within their environment. The individual decided to continue or eliminate the behavior based on the initial response. The person who reacted negatively to this behavior determined if he or she would change their initial response based on the student's initial reaction. The environment contains many opportunities for special education students and staff to learn how to grow and change how they interact or react to others.

Behavioral Theory

John B. Watson is a psychologist who studied how observable behaviors impacted the environment (Schunk, 2011). Watson did not believe in introspection or theories of the

unconscious mind, but rather claimed a person's behavior determines how they learn (Schunk, 2011). Watson explained learning through the responses of stimuli (Schunk, 2011). The experiment with an infant focused on how the infant responded to a specific stimulus (Schunk, 2011). The stimulus was a white rat and a loud noise (Schunk, 2011). The infant learns to respond a specific way when he sees the stimuli (Schunk, 2011). The objective of the experiment was to expose Watson's thoughts about observable behaviors being learned (Schunk, 2011). B. F. Skinner also performed an experiment of Watson's theory and developed a concept called operant conditioning (Schunk, 2011).

According to leaders at the Maricopa Center for Learning and Instruction (1999), operant conditioning pertains to effects of behaviors for future behavioral occurrences. A person is able to learn through consequences, which determine the next occurrence of the behavior. Schunk (2004) stated responses to behaviors are determined by the consequences not by the antecedent stimuli. Therefore, the operant response is based on the effects of the environment (Schunk, 2011). The environment causes the behavioral response (Schunk, 2011). For example, a student who enjoys recess but loses recess for misbehavior may learn not to misbehave because of the consequence. Operant conditioning teaches students to learn from their consequences. Special education students may have difficulty with understanding consequences (Friend, 2011). The students may experience this difficulty with consequences because they do not understand the consequence or the consequence is not meaningful to them. A student with Asperger's Syndrome may possess poor social skills and may not learn from a consequence of loss of recess (Friend, 2011). The students are unable to interact socially with peers so this can negatively reinforce inappropriate behaviors. The consequence has no meaning to them. Operant conditioning is difficult for a special needs student to understand.

Multiple Intelligences

Gardner identified eight types of intelligences (Meltzer, 2011). The eight intelligences are verbal, mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist skills. Gardner (1983) "defined intelligence as the ability to solve problems or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings" (p. 11). The different intelligences are understood across all cultures, and an example is musical skills intelligence. Musical intelligence is understood by all cultures through sound. Gardner believed people possess different intelligences.

Special education students have different intelligences, and some students display strengths in specific intelligences more than others. For example, in the movie *Rain Man*, Dustin Hoffman played the role of an autistic adult with strength in mathematical intelligence. Such a type of intelligence can confuse parents and teachers. The confusion is because this is a splinter skill, or a skill occurring when a student displays skills at a higher level in an advanced skill set than the student displays in a basic skill set. An example of a splinter skill is a 4th grade student who can decode reading at a college level, but can only comprehend at a kindergarten level.

Social Development

Vygotsky extended Piaget's theory of cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Piaget's language development was essential to developing appropriate social interactions according to Vygotsky. Vygotsky (1978) described this as the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. The statement is similar to Roger's theory related to facilitation. A student is learning

from adult facilitation based on the responses through experiences. Vygotsky thought cognition and environment impacted how people interact socially.

Language development is one area of need in special education programs (Friend, 2011). Social interactions require some form of communication, but some students with disabilities have deficits in language development. Language development is one of the stages of cognitive development (Schunk, 2011). Special education students with cognitive deficits may lead to poor social interactions in the school environment. Using the social development theory can help special education teachers' develop instructional approaches for effective communication. Social development theory allows special education administrators' and teachers develop curriculum and instruction for special education programs.

Gestalt Theory

The Gestalt theory was developed in Austria and Germany by Wertheimer, Kohler, and Koffka (Koffka, 2013). Wertheimer applied the Gestalt theory to problem solving since he believed problems should be viewed as a whole rather than as a part (Koffka, 2013). Koffka applied the Gestalt theory to psychology and child psychology because he initially believed infants experience events as a whole than as a part (Koffka, 2013). Kohler tested Koffka's application of Gestalt theory on animals and found animals have insight (Koffka, 2013). The Gestalt theory, therefore, focuses on how people learn (Koffka, 2013).

Constructivism Theory

Vygotsky applied his theory to Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). Three perspectives of this theory exist, including exogenous, endogenous, and dialectical. Exogenous means an "acquisition of knowledge represents a reconstruction of the external world," according to Schunk (2004, p. 238). A person is able to alter how the environment interprets new knowledge.

Schunk (2004) described endogenous perspective as "knowledge derives from previously acquired knowledge and not directly from environmental interactions." (p. 238). From this definition, the environment does not affect how an individual acquires information. Alternate ways to acquire knowledge exist. Regarding dialectical theory, Schunk (2004, p. 238) stated, "knowledge derives from interactions between the persons and their environment." People's interactions and environment assist the individual in acquiring knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivist approaches can apply to special education students.

Methodology Literature Review

Yin (2014) described case study research as seeking to explain some present circumstance. The qualitative case study method was selected to seek an explanation of why special education students' needs aren't being met in the United States school system. The study sought the perspectives of individuals presiding in a special education program representing the IEP team members by their positions (Yin, 2014). These individuals shared their perspectives on possible barriers and causes of students with disabilities needs not being met. The case study method selected allowed exploration and investigation of a minimally researched phenomenon about the supervisory skills of special education administrators (Yin, 2014).

The literature review examined potential areas of concerns impacting special education students' academic achievement and performance. Leadership theories explored provided insight about possible leadership styles being implemented by the special education administrators. Change theories provided the outlook on ways special education administrators may need to make significant changes in their systems. Educational reforms provided concise information about current changes in education occurring nationally in education. Learning theories provided a detailed examination of how students with disabilities learn. The theories explored

demonstrated the theoretical framework of the research design (Yin, 2014). The conceptual framework of exploring educational reforms defined the concepts in the research design (Yin, 2014).

Qualitative case study method and design was the best methodological choice for this exploratory study. The perspectives of the individuals in special education examined the primary areas of concern impacting students' with disabilities achievement and performance. The individuals shared their own experiences within their current special education program. The case study served as the beginning of additional research that can be quantified in a longitudinal multi-case study in the future to assist with improving all special education programs in the United States.

Summary

Chapter 2 provides a detailed description about leadership and supervision in special education programs. Leadership theories helps understand the leadership found in special education programs (Starratt, 2004). Change theories explore possible approaches to improving special education programs (Kezar, 2001). An overview about special education regulations and educational reform supports the need for effective leadership and supervision in special educations (US Department of Education, 2014). Learning theories added insight about how students and teachers learn, which helped develop better special education instruction and curriculum (IDEA, 2004). Chapter 3 presents the research methods are used to explore supervision in special education programs. A discussion of improving their supervision skills would be found in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Special education administrators, personnel, and parents have expressed concern about how special education programs are currently operating (Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, 2008). The specific problem explored how special education administrators are supervising the implementation of IDEA and other federal education regulations. According to Huer (2005), "In most educational environments, learning to become an educational professional has been practiced through the process of supervision" (p. 52). The qualitative approach was selected to explore and identify potential themes in special education supervision affecting special education students' needs not being met consistently. The single case study method was appropriate because the data collected through the words of administrators and other special education employees. collection types were audiotaped interviews and questionnaires (Creswell, 2005).

Appropriateness of Design

The purpose of the research design was to explore possible problems in supervision, management, and evaluation in special education programs. The study goals are not to prove the problem, but to understand the problem. The study was an exploratory design because currently there is little or no previous research on the topic. Qualitative methods rely on the perspectives of the participants, asking broad questions, collecting data on the words of the participants, and then describing and analyzing the words for themes (Creswell, 2013). The perspectives of special education administrators and selected stakeholders described the supervision skills of special education administrators. Qualitative single case study design was appropriate for this exploration about special education students' needs not being met.

Research Design

The selected design was a qualitative single case study. Merriam (2009) defines a qualitative case study as an "in-depth analysis of a bounded system" (p.37). The design was selected to explore the possible problems with the management, supervision, and evaluation by special education managers in one county special education program. Exploring the general problems was to provide some understanding of why special education students' needs are not being met related to the lack of supervision by special education administrators. Yin (2014) describes a case study to investigate a phenomenon within real life context. The qualitative single case study explored possible problems with supervision of special education programs by special education administrators. The goal was to explore the issue rather than prove the issue.

Quantitative approach was not selected because the goal of the study explores the perspectives of special education supervision. Quantitative method emphasizes collecting numeric data, scoring, and measuring the specific variables to test a hypothesis (Creswell, 2013). Using a quantitative approach requires specific research and data that is measurable and observable (Creswell, 2013). Special education administrators' supervision skills were explored to provide information about the leadership in special education. The research design chosen meets the criteria of developing a single case study describing a phenomenon of supervision. Special education administrators' supervision skills are a new phenomenon to be explored. Lunenberg and Ornstein (2004) discussed how to identify relevant phenomena in the external environment of an organization. The results discovered using a single case study design might allow special educators to understand supervision in special education management. The objective of the study was to explore significant characteristics about leadership, management,

supervision, and evaluation to discover possible causes as to why special education students' needs are not being met consistently.

Research Questions

The research questions provide a foundation about supervision by special education administrators in one Northern California County. The research questions investigated through participants' perceptions about the concept. The research questions explored how special education administrators' can improve their supervisory skills. Improving supervisory skills of special education administrators may help reform special education programs and possibly align with general education programs. Education is focusing more on accountability, which requires special education administrators to be effective leaders and supervisors (US Department of Education, 2009). Researching how the special education administrators' supervise and implement education regulations provides more opportunities to improve special education programs.

Below are the research questions:

RQ 1. How are barriers impacting special education programs?

RQ 2. How are special education administrators using the current supervision model?

RQ 3. How are special education administrators utilizing leadership and change models?

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted with one participant representing each group of the sample population. Researcher interviewed: 1 Administrator, 1 Special Education Teacher, 1 Paraeducator, 1 Service Provider, and 1 Parent. The participants were allowed to comment on the questions and format of the questionnaires and interviews. The Administrator expressed concerns about the title of the dissertation prior to her completing her questionnaire and interview. She

reported the title did not appear inviting for Special Education Administrators to be open to participate in the study. After completing the questionnaire and interview, she reported that the study was non-invasive and she would encourage other administrators to participate in the study. The other participants did not provide any feedback other than they were excited to review the findings once the study was completed. No changes to the title, questionnaire, or interview questions were made after reviewing the findings from the pilot study.

Setting and Participants

Sampling Frame

The sample included five administrators, five special education teachers, five paraeducators, five support staff, and five parents. The total number of participants was 25. The selection was based on current position/title, experience, student's disability, parent involvement, availability, and interest. The sample size was small and met the criteria of an exploratory single case study (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Kiess & Green, 2010, 2010). The convenience sampling allowed for exploration of the problem and answers the research questions (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Kiess & Green, 2010, 2010). Sample selection was essential to the completion of this single case study. The data gathered focused on the problem and may lead to new theories or leadership models.

The single qualitative case study explored one county special education program located in Northern California. The selected county special education program serves multiple districts in various cities throughout the county. The management team consists of a Special Education Director and Site Principals. The Site principals supervise sites based on location. The principal supervises more than five classrooms/sites, from preschool to post-secondary programs. The additional duties for principals include supervising transition programs, preschool programs,

early start programs, juvenile hall programs, and workability programs. The director manages and supervises all staff in county special education programs, which includes all four principals. The special education classrooms typically have one teacher and at minimum three or four paraeducators. Site principals are responsible for the safety, security, and supervision of assigned classrooms, including the personnel and students in those classrooms. The principals are responsible for conducting evaluations for all personnel they supervise. Principals are required to implement special education programs based on each student's individualized educational program required and protected by IDEA. Managing and supervising staff in the current capacity appears to be a demanding and difficult task.

The management team is responsible to supervise several classrooms and staff. A crisis in the organization causes the management team to adjust to address the crisis. Attending management meetings and IEP meetings are additional duties for special education administrators. Administrators are required to observe classrooms to conduct evaluations. Evaluations determine the teacher's performance and overall potential student progress on goals and objectives. Some teachers may not agree with the current evaluation model due to limited resources they receive from the State. Administrators provide resources to the teachers, but the State education budget is limited.

The resources available to special education teachers are limited by the financial hardship the special education administrators' may face (California Department of Education, 2009). Minimal training exposure may cause staff to feel incompetent to assist in classroom instruction. The lack of training in students' disabilities and research-based practices may limit the teachers' performance. The paraeducators are required to assist the teachers, but receive minimal training. NCLB requires paraeducators to hold an Associate's degree or higher to work in classrooms; this

new requirement has decreased the number of paraeducators available to teachers (US Department of Education, 2002). Special education already has limited staff due to the lack of interest of working with this population (California Department of Education, 2009).

Administrators are required to supervise programs but, because of the difficulty in recruiting more staff, may be afraid to reprimand or discharge personnel (California Department of Education, 2009). The budget does not allow them to obtain additional training for their staff to improve their skills, which is a requirement of being an effective administrator/leader (California Department of Education, 2009). Conducting evaluations is a requirement of an administrator but special education administrators are not able to develop an efficient evaluation regimen because they are spending less time supervising (Hoy & Miskel, 2002). Special education administrators are spending more time in crisis and meetings. Supervision in special education programs is a gap in service that must be evaluated to improve students' individualized programs.

Access to potential research sites was due to a previous position held within the organization. The participants from the sample were invited to participate before agreeing to consent. The special education department may benefit from the findings of the study to improve accountability in the organization.

Geographic Location

The geographic location of the study was in Northern California. The site selected was a special education program in one county. The purpose of selecting one county was to maximize access to participants and complete the study in a timely manner. The county serves six school districts in seven cities. The sample selected was based on the participant's role and responsibilities in the special education programs.

Selection Criteria

The rationale of the sample selection was based on the research questions and study goals. Participants were selected based on position, program, and current number of years of service in special education programs. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore possible problems with supervision of special education programs by special education administrators. The exploratory method allowed the perspectives or perceptions of supervision, management, and evaluation through personal experiences (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Kiess & Green, 2010, 2010). The primary population selected was special education administrators and special education staff and parents in Northern California. The feasibility of this exploratory design allowed time and access to collect the information needed to achieve the study goals. The study design was appropriate to answer the research questions based on the specific problem.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation of the single case study was through interviews and questionnaires. Only the researcher conducted the interviews and collected questionnaires. The problem statement, research questions, and literature review were used to formulate the interview and questionnaire questions. The interview questions were geared towards obtaining information about special education programs, current supervision and leadership models being utilized, and current evaluation methods within this district's special education program. Interviews would be considered structured because the wording and order of the questions were predetermined (Merriam, 2009). The questionnaire questions focused on gathering demographic information about the participants, current level of professional development, preferred instructional methods, and discovering the types of trainings missing within special education programs. The formulation of the interview and questionnaire questions allowed participants to share concrete

and subjective information based on their own perspectives within the special education programs in their district.

The interviews allowed participants to share their perspectives of about supervision. Each participant was asked15 interview questions specific to supervision. Questionnaires used to gather additional information about the supervision skills of special education administrators. The interviews and questionnaires collected open-ended responses from the participants (Creswell, 2008; Schreiber & Asner-Self, 2011). Open-ended responses allowed the participants to share their experiences with minimal constraints (Creswell, 2008; Schreiber & Asner-Self, 2011). The interviews and questionnaires were used to triangulate in order to offer validity to the data. collected through interviews and questionnaires were interpreted through manual analysis and NVivo software.

The manual analysis and NVivo software were used to interpret the patterns or themes found in this single case study design (Merriam, 2009; QSR International, 2007; Yin, 2014). These data collection methods were audiotaped interviews, questionnaires. The security of the data collection tools is described in the confidentiality section. Interview notes were stored in a secure location in a locked file cabinet. Notes were maintained in an organized file and locked in a storage case. Confidentiality of all instruments was protected at all times.

Data Triangulation

Yin (2014) recommends using six sources of evidence for case study research. The six sources of evidence recommended by Yin are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts. The researcher was not allowed to conduct any direct observations or participant observations. The district reported they did not allow researchers on their school sites or access to their special education programs. In addition,

the researcher was not allowed to obtain in archival records or retrieve any physical artifacts. This study was limited to only three sources of evidence, due to confidentiality concerns. The three sources of evidence are interviews, documentation, and questionnaires. The researcher obtained documentation from literature search of articles, books, and magazines within the field of special education. Interviews were conducted at a specified location per the participant's preference. Questionnaires were completed at the interview session either before or after the interview based on the participant's preference. Data was triangulated using the resources accessible to the researcher.

Data Collection Procedures

McMillian and Schumacher (2014) describe qualitative data collection through the use of observations, in-depth interviews, document and artifact collection, and field observations/supplementary techniques. Data was collected using documentation, interviews, and questionnaires. The researcher was not allowed access to conduct direct or field observations and had no access to artifact documentation because of confidentiality regulations within special education programs and with this district.

Direct observations of special education administrators were excluded because of the confidentiality of the students. Interviews and questionnaires were used as primary data collection methods. A pilot study was conducted to determine how to refine data collection methods (Yin, 2014). Data was triangulated through questionnaires, interviews, and documentation to increase the validity of the study (Yin, 2014). Questionnaires were used to obtain demographic information about participants in addition to their level of professional development. Interviews provided participants' perspectives about supervision in special education programs.

All participants were assigned an alphanumeric code. Pilot group participants were assigned the #005, which corresponded to their alpha-code representing the sample group. The main study participants coding began with #006-#009. Below is a sample of the alphanumeric code for the pilot study was as follows:

AD005: Special Education Administrator in pilot group

SE005: Special Education Teacher in pilot group

PE005: Paraeducator in pilot group

SP005: Service Provider in pilot group

P005: Parent in pilot group

Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire prior to conducting the interview. The instructions were written on the top of each questionnaire. Instructions given were Please print clearly, legible, and within the space given! These instructions were written in red, bolded, and underlined to identify to the participants what was expected in their responses. The instructions allowed the participant to answer the questions openly, but the questions were closed to focus on obtaining factual and unbiased information. Participants completed the questionnaire on paper and the researcher transferred their responses to electronic form. Questionnaires were given to participants at the scheduled interview. Participants completed the questionnaire either before or after the interview based on their preference. Questionnaires included 10 questions focusing on research questions numbers 1- 3.

Interviews were either conducted at the participant's office or home per their preference and availability. Participants responded to 15 interview questions. All participants in the pilot and actual case study received the same questionnaire and interview questions. Participants who needed clarification on how to respond to questions in either questionnaire or interview were

given clarification per their request. Interviews were audio-recorded using a built-in computer recording system and using a cell phone audio recording system. Researcher took notes during each interview on a computer. All interviews were transcribed using a specific electronic format to ensure accurate transcription. The electronic form provided the participants alphanumeric code paired to each of their responses. Interview questions were included in each transcription. Researcher reviewed each transcription using audio recording and aligning with the transcription.

Data Processing/Analysis Procedures

Data collected from the questionnaires and interviews were analyzed using electronic and manual analysis. Data was collected over a 3-month period and analyzed over another 3-month period, totaling 6 months of data analysis. The data analyzed themes in the interview questions related to supervision, management, and evaluation skills. The themes developed from manual analysis and NVivo helped to interpret why special education students' needs are not being met consistently in this county.

Manual analysis was conducted focusing on the content found in the perspectives of the participants. Researcher identified specific repetitive statements to find emerging themes. The number of participants and their responses were also calculated to generate a percentage of similar responses. Responses were compared and contrasted by each participant group to determine discrepancies and similarities in responses by group. Interview and questionnaire responses were linked to specific research questions of the study. Manual data analysis required extensive review of the participants responses paired with the NVivo analysis.

NVivo 10 was the selected electronic software used to analyze the data. This software was primarily used for qualitative analysis and the process is subjective. Nodes were designed to develop themes. Nodes were created by topics found in the literature review, problem statement,

research questions, and participant's responses. The nodes created were Special Education Knowledge, Professional Development, Leadership/Management, and Supervision/Evaluation Methods. The nodes were classified as Job Knowledge, IEP Knowledge, Management Skills, Supervision Level, Evaluation Type, Leadership Skills, and Level of Training. These classifications had the following attributes: Group, Gender, Years of Service, Education, and Position. After nodes were created and classified, then the data was submitted through queries. Text, Word, Compound Coding, and Group Coding queries were all used to analyze the data. Themes emerged after all queries were completed in NVivo.

Themes were developed from the questionnaire and interview responses. The interviews and questionnaires were completed at the same time. During the data analysis process, repeated statements and patterns in the responses appeared after 10 interviews and questionnaires were completed. Participants appeared to share similar perspectives as related to specific questions asked on the questionnaire or interview regardless of their position held within special education. The number of participants was set prior to beginning the study, which meant interviews/questionnaire sessions did not stop once repeated themes emerged. The study would not be complete until full data saturation emerged through analyzing all the data collected to ensure validity of the themes found in the study.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent

Informed consent is an ethical concern prior to conducting research. The guidelines for informed consent to research include explaining the benefits of the study, providing information about the rights and protections of the participants, and obtaining a signed informed consent agreement form (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong, 2013). The informed

consent process was discussed with each participant and administrator authorizing access to study sites.

The participants were invited to complete the study on a voluntary basis. The participants who agree to participate was provided with the explanation of the study, a copy of participant rights, and must complete and sign the informed consent form (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong, 2013). The authorizing administrator completed the same process as the participants. A master copy of informed consent form was attached.

Participants were informed, in writing, of their ability to withdraw from participation in the study at any time. The withdrawal process was included in all consent forms. A timeline were given to participants to ensure the researcher had enough time allotted to conduct the research. The timeline allowed the researcher to obtain alternate participants if a participant elected to withdraw from the study. The timeline stipulated a designated period participants can withdraw. The withdrawal procedure stated that participants must notify the researcher by phone, email, or in writing when they have decided to withdrawal from the research study. Researcher allowed the participants 5-7 business days to give their withdrawal notice. This gave the researcher time to remove all data collected from participant and to destroy the data. Subject's data would have been destroyed through a Document Shredding Company. The data would be shredded in a secure and confidential location the agency provides and the Researcher would be given a certificate to show proof of document shredded. Participants were not being required to explain why they have elected to withdraw, but only to give advance notice. The participants were given the researchers phone number and email address in the consent form. The withdrawal procedure allowed the researcher time to acquire another sample from the population and maintain the

integrity of the method and study. The informed consent form served to protect the confidentiality of the participants and the researcher.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality was closely monitored using specific coding systems and security. The protection of participant confidentiality required obtaining signed nondisclosure documents, restricting access to participant identity, revealing participant information only with written consent, restricting access to data instruments, and not disclosing data subsets (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong, 2013). The confidentiality of the data and participant identification must be secure.

The names of the participants were coded. Research data was be coded. An alphanumeric coding system was used to protect the identity of the participant. Participants who decided to withdraw from the research study were identified through their assigned alphanumeric code. All data collected from the participant who had decided to withdraw be selected by their code and removed from the research study. Researcher may destroy data recorded from a withdrawn participant by using a Document Shredding company. Researcher received a certificate of proof that all documents were destroyed from the withdrawn participant. The researcher kept a copy of the certificate and gave a copy to the withdrawn participant. The coded data was kept in a locked confidential computer file saved on an external hard drive. The external hard drive was in a secure location with only one person allowed access. The tapes or digital recordings were exclusive to the primary researcher and the transcriber. Participants and data were protected throughout the research process.

Transferability, Credibility, and Trustworthiness

Qualitative studies are subjective in nature. The purpose of a case study is to gain multiple perspectives of a single organization, event, or situation (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Yin, 2014). Using multiple subjects versus single subjects allowed for a cross-case analysis (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Yin, 2014). The pilot study represented a single study before conducting a cross-case analysis (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Yin, 2014).

The validity of qualitative research relied on the interpretations of the data. The interviews and questionnaires added validity to the data. The interviews allowed the participants to share their own interpretation about the supervision of special education administrators. The questionnaires gave additional information about the supervision of special education administrators with minimal bias and anonymity of the participants. The data analysis and data collection methods worked simultaneously to maintain the validity of the information described from the sample group. The interviews and questionnaires generated data as the participants share their perspectives of special education supervision. The researcher used the data collection and analysis to interpret the data.

Data was analyzed multiple times to ensure validity of the findings. Researcher examined all potential biases that may impact the integrity of the study if alternative themes were selected. Examining the data repeatedly until reaching data saturation provided reliability and validity of the results. Conducting a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the data collected kept the emergence of themes possible in this study.

Summary

Chapter 3 described the research methods used in this qualitative single case study. The problem and purpose statements were restated to ensure the focus of the research study. The

purpose of the research design described the methodology of the study. The study goals provided the appropriateness of the design defined. The feasibility of the study was based on the ability and purpose of conducting the study. The sampling frame described the characteristics of the population group. The informed consent, confidentiality, and geographic location described how the participants were examined and treated based on research code of ethics. Instrumentation and data collection methods described the research tools used with all participants in the study. Data analysis and validity of the study demonstrated how the information was interpreted without bias. The research methods allowed people to generalize and replicate in future studies. Using a qualitative case study research method provides researchers the ability to be exploratory in a variety of subjects and topics. Readers should be able to apply the findings within this study to their own perspectives they may have about special education. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Chapter 4 describes the case study results from data collected through questionnaires and interviews. The population characteristics were defined by current position held in special education, gender, education level, and number of years in service within special education programs. Data collection procedures were identified based on what type of data was collected, who collected the data, and where data was collected for all participants in the sample. A pilot study was conducted for this case study, which outlined based on major themes found, how the questionnaires were developed, how interviews were conducted, manual analysis conducted, and the use of NVivo software to analyze data discussed. Findings were based on common or major themes found in the case study. Themes were described and referenced to the specific data sources.

Population Characteristics

Population characteristics included current position held in special education, gender, education level, and number of years of service in special education. Participants were grouped by current position in special education. Participants were selected based on position, program, and current number of years of service in special education programs. The groups represent the team members that are often included in a student's IEP program. The groups are Special Education Administrators (AD), Special Education Teachers (SE), Paraeducators (PE), Service Providers (SP), and Parents (P). All participants were coded with acronyms listed by group paired with a numeric code.

The demographic information was gathered through the consent form and questionnaire completed by all participants. Specific questions about education and years of service were

present in the questionnaire. Demographic data provides additional information about each participant.

Participants included administrators, teachers, paraeducators, service providers, and parents who represent the sample population for the case study. Charts were created for the population characteristics to demonstrate the sample demographics. The population demographics found in the pilot study below:

Table 2

Pilot Group

Participant	**Position**	**Gender**	**Education Level**	**Years of Service**
AD005	Special Ed. Director	Female	Ph.D.	36
SE005	Resource Specialist	Female	Ph.D. (ABD)	12
PE005	Special Purpose Assistant	Female	Some College	8
SP005	School Psychologist	Female	Masters	17
P005	Parent	Female	College Graduate	6

Table 3

Administrator Group

Participant	Position	Gender	Education Level	Years of Service
AD006	SELPA Director	Male	Masters	27
AD007	Special Ed. Director	Female	Masters	32
AD008	County Special Ed. Principal	Female	Masters	35
AD009	District Special Ed. Program Specialist	Female	Masters	23

Table 4

Special Education Teacher Group

Participant	Position	Gender	Education Level	Years of Service
SE006	Transition Post Secondary Special Ed. Teacher	Female	Masters	16
SE007	Secondary Special Ed. Teacher	Female	Moderate/Severe Credential	16
SE008	Severely-Handicapped	Female	Masters	9

	Elementary Special Ed. Teacher			
SE009	Core Inclusion Elementary Special Ed. Teacher	Female	Masters	5

Table 5

Paraeducator Group

Participant	Position	Gender	Education Level	Years of Service
PE006	Paraeducator	Female	Some College	15
PE007	Special Purpose Assistant	Female	Some College	9
PE008	Paraeducator	Female	Some College	13
PE009	Paraeducator	Female	Some College	17

Table 6

Service Provider Group

Participant	Position	Gender	Education Level	Years of Service
SP006	Occupational Therapist	Female	Masters	13
SP007	Behavior	Female	Masters	20

	Intervention Specialist			
SP008	Speech and Language Pathologist	Female	Masters	15
SP009	Client Program Coordinator	Female	Bachelors plus 1 year of Post Grad	15

Table 7

Parent Group

Participant	**Position**	**Gender**	**Education Level**	**Years of Service**
P006	Parent	Female	Some College	10
P007	Parent	Female	Bachelors	17
P008	Parent	Female	Associates	14
P009	Parent	Female	Juris Doctor	2

Review of Data Analysis

Data Analysis Steps

Manual analysis was conducted prior to using the NVivo software. There were seventeen steps followed to complete this analysis. This analysis process allowed raw view of the data and the NVivo enhanced this process. These specific steps provided a detailed process of reviewing the data in a variety of methods. Themes were found after conducting all the steps in the manual analysis. The themes would be compared to potential themes found using the NVivo software.

Below is the table outlining the steps and specific procedures used in this manual analysis:

Table 8

Manual Analysis Steps and Procedures

Steps	Procedures
Step One	Read and noted all transcriptions for interviews
Step Two	Read and noted all questionnaires
Step Three	Categorized population characteristics from the questionnaires
Step Four	Identified the positions held and categorized into groups
Step Five	Identified education levels of each participant
Step Six	Identified the years of service-Averaged
Step Seven	Identified number of trainings -Averaged
Step Eight	Identified number of participants who have received professional development
Step Nine	Identified and calculated the number of participants who prefer visual supports, application-based trainings, reviewed training materials
Step Ten	Identified types of trainings missing in Special Education
Step Eleven	Identified Instructional styles preferred
Step Twelve	Identified correlations between the groups based on responses given
Step Thirteen	Compared group responses of questions based on position held
Step Fourteen	Compared level of trainings in last 3 years
Step Fifteen	Paired participant responses to identified nodes
Step Sixteen	Linked interview and questionnaire questions to research questions
Step Seventeen	Identified and calculated the number of participants who answered the question based on alignment to special education fundamentals and regulations plus linked to the literature review

NVivo analysis was conducted after the manual analysis. The information collected from the manual analysis was inputted into the NVivo software. The nodes were developed based on the participants' responses to questions on the questionnaire and interviews. Information gathered during the literature review was added into the classification categories, which related to the research questions. Attributes were found from the questionnaires completed by the participants. After inserting all the data and coding, information queries were conducted to help identify themes paired with potential themes found in manual analysis. Once the themes were identified, then they were compared to themes found in manual analysis. Below is the table representing the NVivo analysis:

**It should be noted that, during the data analysis process, one committee member did not agree with the original themes found and requested for the researcher to re-analyze the data using both manual and NVivo software. Data was re-analyzed per the request and the themes found represent the final results of the data analysis.*

Table 9

NVivo Analysis

Nodes	**Classification**	**Attributes**	**Queries**
IEP Process and Implementation	Job Knowledge	Group	Text Query
Management	IEP Knowledge	Gender	Word Frequency Query
Supervision Models	Management Skills	Yrs. of Service	Compound Coding Query
Evaluation Methods	Supervision Level	Education	Group Coding Query
Leadership Styles	Evaluation Type	Position	
Trainings	Leadership Skills		
Instructional Style	Level of Training		
Special Education Knowledge			

Data Triangulation

After the manual and electronic data analysis, the data was triangulated to begin developing themes. Reviewing the interview responses, questionnaire responses, and documentation found within the literature search allowed the researcher to identify reoccurring patterns within the data collected. The reoccurring patterns found were the starting point for developing themes found in the study. In this figure below, demonstrates the theme development identified during data triangulation.

Figure 1

Theme Development Figure

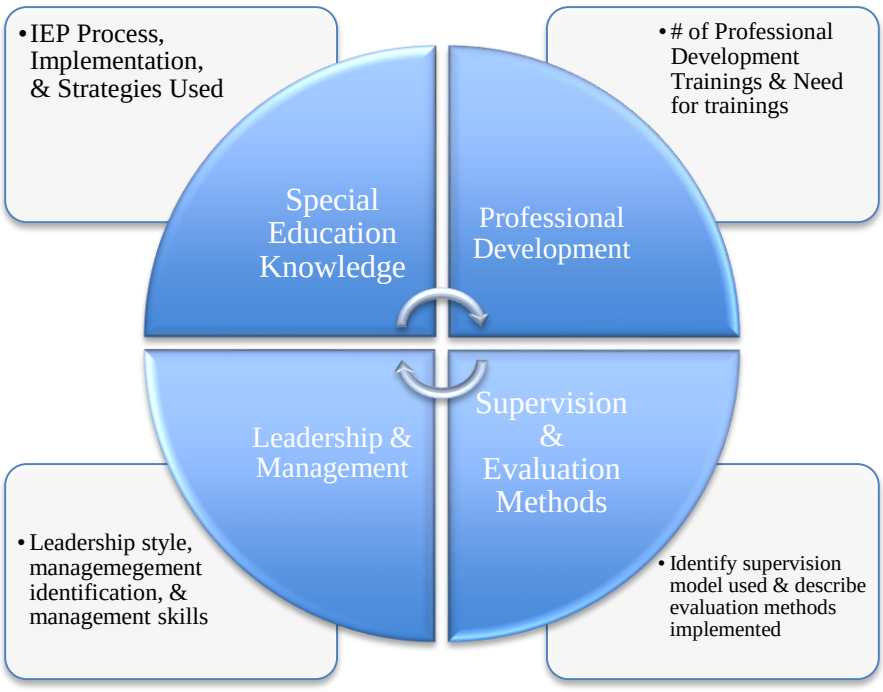

**Figure 1 represents the theme development found in the manual and NVivo analyses.*

Findings

Themes were identified through the NVivo analysis of the participants' questionnaires and interviews. Findings are presented using tables, direct quotes, and summaries. Questionnaire themes are presented first followed by interview themes. Selected quotes represent repeated perspectives shared by participants that align with the major themes. Major themes found in the study addressed the research questions of the study, which explored the supervision of special education programs.

Questionnaire Themes

1. Professional Development Trainings in last 3 years varied by position
2. Professional Development Trainings are required for most positions held in Special Education
3. Instructional Style Preference Varied
4. Visual Supports and Application-based Trainings are Preferred
5. Training Materials are reviewed after attending trainings
6. Different Types of Trainings are Missing for Special Education Providers and Parents

Theme #1: Professional Development Trainings in last 3 years varied by position

Table 10

# of Professional Development Trainings in last 3 years

Groups	**AD**	**SE**	**PE**	**SP**	**P**
Less than 10	1	3	4	3	3
More than 10	0	0	0	0	1
Over 20	3	1	0	1	0

**Note: One participant in the Parent Group attended 12 trainings, which were more than 10.*

The table is divided by group and by the number of trainings attended in the last 3 years. Each group has 4 respondents, but some respondents may have attended more than 10 trainings

and attended over 20 trainings in the last 3 years. Administrators attended the most number of trainings, while other groups attended less than 10 trainings in last 3 years.

Theme #2: Professional Development Trainings are required for most positions held in Special Education

Table 11

Required Professional Development Trainings

Groups	**AD**	**SE**	**PE**	**SP**	**P**
Yes	2	4	3	3	0
No	2	0	1	1	4

Professional development trainings are required according to 60% of the respondents. Parents appear to be the only group who are not required to attend professional development trainings.

Theme #3: Instructional Style Preference Varied

Table 12

Varied Instructional Styles

Groups	**AD**	**SE**	**PE**	**SP**	**P**
Interactive	4	0	0	1	0
Multi-Sensory	2	0	0	2	0
Kinesthetic	0	3	1	1	1
Combination	4	3	2	3	1
Activities	0	0	2	0	1

**Note: Participants preferred more than one instructional method, which is reflected on the table.*

The instructional styles preferred for trainings by the respondents varied. The top 5 preferred instructional styles were selected to be presented in the above table. The types of instructional styles preferred to be non-traditional instructional style of learning. The traditional mode of instruction during training is lecture, discussion, or both. The respondents preferred more engaging modes of instruction, by being an active participant versus just being sedentary.

Theme #4: Visual Supports and Application-based Trainings are Preferred

Table 13

Visual Supports and Application-based Trainings Preferred

Groups	**AD**	**SE**	**PE**	**SP**	**P**
Yes	4	4	4	4	3
No	0	0	0	0	1

Visual supports and application-based trainings appeared to be the preferred mode in trainings. Participants reported the use of visual supports to be an effective mode in trainings. Application-based trainings focused on learning techniques or strategies that can be applied directly in their profession. Parents were not all able to report the preference of trainings as some reported not attending too many trainings in the last 3 years.

Theme #5: Training Materials are reviewed after attending trainings

Table 14

Training Materials Reviewed

Groups	**AD**	**SE**	**PE**	**SP**	**P**
Yes	4	4	3	4	3
No	0	1	1	0	1

Most participants reported reviewing materials after attending trainings.

Theme #6: Different Types of Trainings are Missing for Special Education Providers and Parents

Table 15

Missing Trainings

Groups	**AD**	**SE**	**PE**	**SP**	**P**
Behavior	1	1	4	1	1
Core Curriculum	1	2	0	0	0
Technology	1	1	0	0	0
Classroom Management	0	1	0	1	0
Inclusion	1	0	0	1	0
Team Building	0	1	0	0	1
Diagnosis	0	1	1	1	1

Training

**Note: Participants reported more than one type of training missing in special education, which is reflected on the table.*

A variety of trainings are missing per the respondents. Researcher selected the top 7 missing trainings reported by the respondents. Behavior was the top missing training out of all trainings identified. Paraeducators who work directly with special education students were the primary group who identified behavior as a primary need for training. Special Education teachers identified Core Standards curriculum training as their primary need for training. Other respondents varied with their identified trainings, but none of the trainings identified was their primary concern based on their responses.

Interview Themes

Interviews were audio recorded and notes were taken to collect the perspectives of the participants. The interviews were transcribed to ensure the validity of participants' responses. There were 76 pages of transcribed data recorded. The transcribed interviews were used to analyze data during both the manual and electronic data analysis. Recordings were stored in a locked and secured external hard drive in a locked office. Below are the interview themes found:

1. Knowledgeable on the Who, What, and How of Special Education Programs
2. Limited IEP Access for Direct Support Providers
3. Data Collection is Primary Mode and Strategy used to Implement IEP
4. Shared Management Responsibility
5. Lack of Special Education Administrator Visibility
6. Varied Management, Supervision, and Evaluation by each Respondent Group
7. Evaluation Frequency Identified as Monthly by 25% of Respondents

Theme #1: Knowledgeable on the Who, What, and How of Special Education Programs

Table 16

Who, What, and How of Special Education Programs

Groups	AD	SE	PE	SP	P
IEP Team Members	4	4	4	4	4
Special Education Program Involvement	4	4	4	4	4
Eligibility	4	4	3	4	3
Wide Range of Services	4	4	4	4	4
Service Delivery	4	4	4	4	4

Respondents were knowledgeable about who, what, and how special education programs are operated. All respondents identified IEP team members. AD007 identified and stated IEP team members as "an administrator designee, special education teacher, the parent, and general education teacher" as the core team members. This was a common response found throughout all the respondents. Respondents defined the type of special education program in which they work or participate. SP008 describe their program as "a moderate to severe preschool program in a separate facility with integration opportunities." Providers described the program and clients served, while parents described their child's current program. Special education eligibility was described based on disability or identifying the disability categories to be in special education.

AD007 described eligibility as “One of 13 categories that the state allows us to determine is an eligible condition under meeting the needs of what IDEA tells us..” Parents did not identify eligibility by categories, but based eligibility on disability. P007 states “really anything related to their disability.” Providers and parents have a difference in the eligibility criterion, but they both agree the criterion is related to disability. Services offered in special education were based on individual needs and varied by student need. SE009 identified range of services based on what they offer in their program. SE009 stated “So we have various services that are offered at our site. Those sites include speech and language services, OT services, behavioral services, specialized academics services, intensive support services, psychological services and those are the only ones I’ve utilized.” Parents described services based on their child’s program. P006 stated “The standard OT speech services, APE, behavioral services, academic services, inclusion, she goes to music, mainstreams into music, and community based outings.” Service delivery varied per respondent’s role. Service providers stated “It varies and is individualized for the based on their individual education plan but there’s a range of delivery, per SP009.” Parents stated service delivery based on their child’s program. P009 stated “He’s getting the push in service and he also has in class in his regular class with the special purpose aide.” Overall, all respondents knew who is on the IEP team, what requirements or criteria is to be in special education, identified program type, what types of services are offered, and how services are delivered to special education students.

Theme #2: Limited IEP Access for Direct Support Providers

Table 17

Limited IEP Access

Groups	**AD**	**SE**	**PE**	**SP**	**P**

Yes	0	0	4	4	0
No	4	4	0	0	4

IEP access appeared to be limited to paraeducators and service providers. Paraeducators reported they were not allowed to attend or participate in IEP's. PE006 states "We don't assist in the IEP process" and PE007 stated "I really don't know that much about the IEP process." Service providers stated they receive IEP's after the IEP is conducted. SP006 states "I usually get them after they get an IEP." Typically, service needs are identified by the IEP team, but service providers are sent referrals after the IEP has taken place. Designated services can only be offered after the student has qualified for special education.

Theme #3: Data Collection is Primary Mode and Strategy used to Implement IEP

Table 18

Data Collection

Groups	**AD**	**SE**	**PE**	**SP**	**P**
Yes	4	4	4	4	4
No	0	0	0	0	0

Data collection was the primary mode and strategy used to implement IEPs. All of the respondents stated the use of data collection to record student progress and assess performance. AD009 states, "There is data collection through various means." SE008 describes one of the modes of data collection as "to have a well- informed staff that understand what goals we are working on for each child. Each of my students has a program binder and in that binder are their specific goals." Then these program binders are utilized by support staff as a mode of data collection on student's goals. PE009 states "Well our teacher usually gives us their IEP goals and

we go through them as a team and we go over them and we have a list of what needs to be met and we try to work on that on a daily basis." Data used to report academic performance to the parents using a progress report. P007 states "I just make sure that every progress report how my child is progressing and what the teachers are doing in terms of them meeting the goals." The same data used to report progress is also used to generate a district-wide progress monitoring that is given to the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) and to the State. AD006 states "we have a system of tiered supports to ensure implementation, including progress monitoring regarding a variety of performance data points." AD006 goes on to report later in their interview by stating "and several hundred data points that are required to be reported by the state of CA, if it moves in special education we measure it." Data collection appears to be the primary source in special education to monitor student progress and performance.

Theme #4: Shared Management Responsibility

Table 19

Shared Management Responsibility

Groups	**AD**	**SE**	**PE**	**SP**	**P**
Yes	4	4	4	4	4
No	0	0	0	0	0

All of the respondents identified special education management as a shared responsibility. Many of the respondents reported the shared responsibility was between the special education administrator and the special education teacher. The special education teacher was referred as a "Case Manager" and not just a special education teacher. AD006 states "It is a shared responsibility of all parties in the system to manage services and programs." Another

administrator, AD007 states "I am responsible for managing services, but they are the individual providers at each school site are supervised by the site principal so they help manage the implementation of the program." This administrator is identifying the shared management responsibility with the school site administrator. Special education teachers identified themselves as "Case Managers" to describe how they manage each student's program on their set caseload. SE006 states "I am the case manager." SE009 states "**:** In my situation the special education director manages all programs and models at each site. In terms of programs running at each school site, my administrator oversees my program but I typically pretty able to run it as I see fit based on the needs of the current caseload of students." Respondents have identified a shared management responsibility based on program versus classroom management. Another administrator describes what happens if there is a flaw in the shared management system. AD008 states "The teacher does ultimately because she's the case manager, but if she screws up the responsibility falls on my shoulders that I'm making sure she's doing her job as the case manager." AD006 states "to ensure the IEP is delivered, however, the law contemplates the special education administrator whose authorized to offer services and the LEA is ultimately responsible for the provision of services." Again, AD006's response demonstrates the shared management responsibility of special education at the local and state level.

Theme #5: Lack of Special Education Administrator Visibility

Table 20

Limited Visibility

Groups	**AD**	**SE**	**PE**	**SP**	**P**
Yes	0	4	4	4	4
No	4	0	0	0	0

All respondents except special education administrators reported limited visibility of special education administrators. Many of the respondents reported the special education administrators having limited amount of time to observe or evaluate programs unless there was a crisis situation. When asked "How do Special Education Administrators manage, supervise, and evaluate Special Education services and programs?", many of the respondents were not sure how to respond, due to the limited visibility of special education administrators. SE006 first response was "I'm not really sure" and then proceeds to describe why they are not sure. The reason SE006 was unable to answer the question was because "All of our administrators are extremely overworked for the amount of programs and for the expansion of programs that have happened over the years, per SE006." So, one of the special education teachers is reporting special education administrators as being overworked, which may be the cause of limited visibility, but the paraeducators described another reason. PE007 states "I honestly don't know because I never see her." PE006 states "I have no idea how they manage and supervise the teachers for the programs, but the way they evaluate and manage paraeducators are coming in for 10-15 minutes to evaluate them on a year or two of their work, which in my opinion is not accurate." Service providers reported having meetings with administrators to discuss their designated services. SP006 states "In regards to me I have a monthly meeting with the administrator and we just go over things that come up." Another service provider describes how the special education administrator observes them and later develops an evaluation. SP008 states "There's direct observation in the classroom for me in my therapy sessions both in the classroom and in my therapy room. There's an evaluation of my documentation like in my reports or IEPs. Then there's an evaluation form that the administrators complete as their guide that is agreed upon in our contract. Then manage, I don't know if I can speak on that." Parents were extremely limited

in responding to how special education administrators supervise, evaluate, and manage special education programs.

Theme #6: Varied Management, Supervision, and Evaluation by each Respondent Group

Table 21

Varied Management, Supervision, and Evaluation

Groups	**AD**	**SE**	**PE**	**SP**	**P**
Management					
Limited Visibility	0	4	4	4	4
Communication by Admin. (Via phone or email)	0	0	0	0	0
Supervision					
Observation of Staff by Admin.	1	2	0	2	2
Meetings with Admin. and Staff	1	3	3	2	1
Feedback from Admin. To Staff	2	2	1	1	0
Evaluation					
Data Collection	1	0	1	0	0
Frequency	4	2	1	1	0
Guidelines	1	0	0	3	0
IEPs	0	1	1	2	1

**Note: Some participants responded to the questions with more than one response in describing how special education administrators manage, supervise, and evaluate special education programs.*

Knowledge of the management, supervision, and the evaluation skills used in special education programs varied within the participant groups. The table was divided into three categories; management, supervision, and evaluation. Sub-categories were developed to identify the common themes found about the description of management, supervision, and evaluation by participants.

Management had two categories: limited visibility and communication. All participants except the special education administrators identified limited visibility as a concern with management of special education programs. PE007 states “I honestly don’t know because I never see her.” SE007 reports “I often wonder that myself since they aren’t able to get around to the classrooms enough.” Participants described limited visibility as not seeing the administrator or how the administrator is unable to get to the classrooms. Communication was described by participants as meetings with support providers and using emails. SP007 states “Special education administrators managed the program typically through meetings with like consultations with some of the main IEP providers like the teachers and behavior services to find out what their take is on what is happening within the program for particular students or as a whole.” Meetings with direct support providers serve to communicate the needs of special education programs to special education administrators. Emails are used to communicate with staff by administrators. AD008 reports “the use of email if I am really having problems with something I can always call on the phone too.” SE006 states “recently our administrators have come to ask our paraeducators about teachers.” Special education administrators appear to rely on communicating with direct support providers to manage special education programs. Supervision was described through observation, meetings, and feedback. SP007 states “The supervision of it is seemingly minimal they seem to be very busy so often times scheduled visits

are very few and far between." Participants are again referring to limited visibility by special education administrators, by stating how supervision is minimal. Observation was a common practice of special education administrators. SE006 describes observations as "walk thru's, thru classroom to make sure everybody is on task and things are being followed." Special education administrators observed classrooms to determine the needs of the program. AD008 describes the importance of supervision by stating "You can't supervise sitting in the office here. You have to get in there and observe and just do drop ins planned observations." Meetings between direct support providers and administrators were described by all participants. SP007 states how supervision through meetings as "it's more through the interview process of other people who work with whomever they're supervising." SE006 reports "They have streamlined it a little bit where as they assign specific grade levels to administrators instead of doing it geographically." AD008 describes how they meet with staff about what they observed stating, "report to the team of administrators my perceptions of what I'm seeing, so we get objective." Participants using data collection, level of frequency, set guidelines, and attending IEP meetings, described evaluation. The administrator and paraeducator groups described data collection. AD006 describes data collection to the state, "several hundred data points that are required to be reported by the state of CA." Each state requires special education programs to report on specific items to ensure the implementation of the IEP. These data were used to evaluate the performance of the special education programs. PE006 states "I can only assume that they manage by data." Some support staff struggled with understanding how special education administrators evaluate special education programs. SE007 describes evaluation as "a mystery to me how they really do evaluate it because they are not present enough to be able to." Again, the reoccurring theme of lack of administrator visibility is stated to describe evaluation of special education programs. Most

participants could not describe the level of frequency, but administrators reported evaluation occurred monthly. Service providers and administrators reported guidelines. SP008 reports "an evaluation form that the administrators complete as their guide that is agreed upon in our contract." The evaluation form serves as a guide for administrators to identify staff performance. SP009 states "they manage it under the guidelines of Ed code and IDEA." The guidelines of Ed Code and IDEA are the regulations found in general and special education programs. Each district may have a different set of guidelines they follow. SP009 states "each district might have a different set of guidelines." IEP meetings are used to evaluate special education programs. P007 states how administrators "are a part of the IEP process."

Theme #7: Evaluation Frequency Identified as Monthly

Table 22

Evaluation Frequency

Groups	**AD**	**SE**	**PE**	**SP**	**P**
Monthly	4	2	1	1	0
Unknown	0	2	3	3	4

Special education programs evaluation frequency was unable to be identified by all participants except for the administrators and 2 teachers. Most participants were not able to determine the frequency of the evaluations. P006 reported "I don't know how often they meet. I don't think that it's often enough." Parents appeared to be the least knowledgeable about special education program evaluation. Some referred to the IEP as a time to evaluate the programs. P007 states "Basically in the IEP meetings." Service providers reported they were unclear about evaluation frequency too. SP006 states "I don't know. If they're needed at IEP then they're there

for the most part but as far as how often they meet I don't know." Again, Service Providers and Parents both refer to IEP meetings as a time for evaluation of special education programs. Paraeducators were unable to identify evaluation frequency due to limited visibility by administrators. PE007 states "I think it goes back to the same one I really never see her." This means PE007 was unable to determine how special education administrators manage, supervise, and evaluate, so they could not identify evaluation frequency. Administrators reported, they meet monthly to review programs. One administrator expressed they sometimes meet daily depending on the program or issue. AD008 reports "we meet once a month and it's an all day meeting." AD007 states "Well, I meet with those particular staff, I just mentioned I meet with them monthly." AD008 and AD007 are both implying meeting with a team or a specific team to discuss and evaluate programs. Based on the responses shared by participants, not all IEP team members are aware of the frequency of special education program evaluation.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 described and summarized the results from this qualitative case study. Population demographics displayed the sample's role, experience in special education programs, and education level. Pilot study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the instrumentation used for the study. The researcher did not change any of the instruments used in the pilot study. The tools were deemed valid for the study based on the pilot study results. Participants were given a questionnaire to complete and participated in an audio-recorded interview. All participants were given the same questionnaire and interview questions. No questionnaire or interview questions were modified for any participant. Participants were not probed to seek additional information. Researcher did provide clarity of questions when asked by

the participant. Questionnaire results found 6 themes and Interviews had 7 themes found related to the general problem of the study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The qualitative single case study explored the supervision in special education programs. The single case study method was appropriate because these data were collected through the words of administrators and other special education employees of the organization explored. Audio taped interviews and questionnaires were used as primary forms of data collection tools. The research design chosen met the criteria for developing a single case study. The results discovered using a single case study design allowed special educators to improve supervision in special education management. The specific sample group for the pilot group included five participants representing special education administrators, special education teachers, paraeducators, service providers, and parents. In the study there were twenty participants and four in each subgroup representing administrators, teachers, paraeducators, service providers, and parents.

Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the findings in Chapter 4. All the findings are interpreted and compared to the literature review in Chapter 2. Themes were found in both the pilot and case study, which analyzed in a summary format. The data collected correlated to how leaders can benefit from the information found in the study. Implications and recommendations are offered to the leadership community. Suggestions for further research assists with improving special education programs in the United States. Participants shared their own personal interpretations, reflection, and personal views about the findings and for future research.

Population Characteristics

The population characteristics were identified and listed in Chapter 4. Population characteristics were geared towards current position held in special education, gender, education level, and number of years of service in special education. All participants had some level of

college education. Many held post-graduate degrees. Most participants in the study had 10+ years of service or involvement in special education. A few of the participants had over 20 years of experience, which were predominantly special education administrators. Participants were grouped by current position in special education. Participants were selected based on position, special education program, and current number of years of service in special education programs. The groups represent the team members that are often included in student's IEP program. The groups are: Special Education Administrators (AD), Special Education Teachers (SE), Paraeducators (PE), Service Providers (SP), and Parents (P). All participants were coded with an acronym listed by group paired with a numeric code.

Table 23

Participant's Population Characteristics from Pilot and Main Studies

Population Characteristics	**# of Participants**
College Education	25
Post-Graduate Degrees	17
10+ Years of Service	13
20+ Years of Service	6

Findings

Data limitations within this study were identified prior to beginning data research. School administrators in the county selected for this study reported that they do not allow researchers within the special education departments due to student confidentiality regulations. The study design was changed to conduct only interviews and have participants complete questionnaires. Direct observations of Special Education Administrators day-to-day operations may have provided an additional perspective into the possible needs of special education students.

Questionnaire Findings Summary

Table 24

Questionnaire Themes

Questionnaire Themes	Participants Responses
T1: Professional Development Trainings in last 3 years varied by position	Administrators attended the most (10+) Paraeducators and parents attended the least (0-5)
T2: Professional Development Trainings are required for most positions held in Special Education	11 Participants stated "No" 13 Participants stated "Yes" 1 Participant stated "Sometimes" *Parents all stated no based on their role, which doesn't require professional development training.
T3: Instructional Style Preference Varied	All participants shared different instructional preferences
T4: Visual Supports and Application-based Trainings are Preferred	80% of the participants preferred these training supports
T5: Training Materials are reviewed after attending trainings	72% of the participants reviewed training materials
T6: Different Types of Trainings are Missing for Special Education Providers and Parents	All participants shared different types of trainings that are missing in special education

The study consisted of 20 participants, which were divided into 5 groups by their role in special education programs. The themes found in the study differed based on participant position or role held in special education programs. The questionnaire provided demographic information of all participants in the study. Also, the questionnaire identified a need for more professional development opportunities to other special education team members other than administrators. All participants reported a variety of trainings missing in special education programs. Questionnaire findings described participant responses found in the questionnaire and was linked to literature review in Ch. 2.

Participants were all college educated. Since they were college educated, one could assume that all participants understood the importance of learning and growing in education. In Chapter 2, learning theories were described to help understand how students learn as related to special education programs. The learning theories described are Social Learning, Cognitive,

Experiential, Behavioral, Multiple Intelligences, Social Development, Gestalt, and Constructivism. Participants reported learning experiential as a preference. The use of visual supports, hands on, and application-based trainings was a preferred preference for the participants when attending professional development trainings. People learn through their experiences within their environment (Beard & Wilson, 2013; Neill, 2006). Experiential learning theory appears to be used frequently in special education programs based on participant responses (Beard & Wilson, 2013). Participants appeared to use their college experiences and other professional development to describe what is missing in trainings for special education programs.

Professional development appeared to be more prevalent within the administrator group. Most administrators attended over 10 trainings within the last 3 years. Some of them could not even recall the number because they had attended so many. The least trained were the paraeducators and parents. Paraeducators are support staff assigned directly to special education classrooms to help support students with disabilities (IDEA, 2004). These staff actually works directly with the students in the classroom or other places on the school site or in the community (IDEA, 2004). According to the IEP, specific goals and objectives are designed to help students with disabilities meet their academic needs (IDEA, 2004). Parents are team members in the IEP and serve as an advocate for their child in the IEP meeting (IDEA, 2004). Yet, both paraeducators and parents receive the least amount of professional development or attend fewer trainings, in regards to special education. The Blueprint Reform, states how funds are distributed to states for professional development within school systems in the United States, which includes special education programs (US Department of Education, 2010).

Questionnaire responses identified professional development and training preferences as a potential barrier as to why special education needs are not being met. The key stakeholders in special education programs are not attending or being required to attend trainings that would help them become effective leaders or instructors. Highly qualified educators are a priority in the education system in the United States (US Department of Education, 2010). Professional development and parent involvement appear to be essential to students' success in education achievement (US Department of Education, 2010).

Interview Findings Summary

Table 25

Interview Themes

Interview Themes	Participants Responses
T1: Knowledgeable on the Who, What, and How of Special Education Programs	100% are knowledgeable about special education programs
T2: Limited IEP Access for Direct Support Providers	40% reported limited access
T3: Data Collection is Primary Mode and Strategy used to Implement IEP	100% uses data collection as primary source of IEP implementation and as a strategy
T4: Shared Management Responsibility	100% reported shared responsibility
T5: Lack of Special Education Administrator Visibility	100% reported lack of visibility
T6: Varied Management, Supervision, and Evaluation by each Respondent Group	100% reported varied management, supervision, and evaluation
T7: Evaluation Frequency Identified as Monthly by 25% of Respondents	75% reported no knowledge of the frequency of evaluation of special education programs

Interview findings provided insight to the general problem through the perspectives of the participants. Each participant shared their perspectives based on their role in special education. The perspectives differed because each participant's role was different. Some participants manage special education programs, some were direct support providers, and some served as

advocates for the students. Special education programs may have staff in varied roles, but they all play a key part in helping students succeed.

Participants were knowledgeable about who is on the special education team, what programs and services are offered to students, and how services are implemented in special education programs. IDEA is the guide for all special education personnel and parents with disabled children. Special education administrators and special education teachers both share the responsibility of managing special education programs. Service providers and paraeducators serve as direct support providers in special education programs. Parents are the advocates for their disabled child and they monitor how the IEP is implemented for their child. The responses shared by participants identified the who, what, and how of special education programs.

Direct support providers expressed limited access to the IEP. Service providers reported being included in the IEP after the IEP has been written. These services provided by service providers are accessed through a referral process based on the students needs. IDEA ensures all special education students received the services they need to access the general education curriculum, (IDEA, 2004). Service providers offer designated services to students with disabilities. Paraeducators offer direct support to students with disabilities. Participants reported they are not allowed to attend IEP meetings, yet they shared how they are expected to implement the IEP. Paraeducators described how they work with the students directly on goals written in the IEP. The paraeducators limited access to the IEP appears to serve as a barrier in special education programs.

Data collection is the primary strategy used to implement the IEP. All participants expressed how they use data to identify progress on IEP goals and evaluate special education programs. Administrators described how they use the data to report progress to the State and to

evaluate their staff's performance in special education programs. Special education teachers use the data to record progress on goals. Data collected by the paraeducators. Service providers use the data to record progress on goals they set for the students and they discuss how the administrators evaluate their reports. Parents reported how they are given the data results in the IEP progress report. Data appeared to be a beneficial strategy for evaluating special education programs.

Special education program management is reported as a shared responsibility between the special education administrator and special education teacher. The special education teacher is identified as the case manager of the student's program, but the administrator is responsible for managing the overall special education program. The special education program includes students and personnel. IEP progress determined how effective the special education programs are impacting the needs of the students. Unfortunately, some of the participants were unable to describe how the special education administrators manage programs.

Participants reported limited visibility of special education administrators. Participants expressed how they rarely see the manager in their classroom or observe them working with special education students directly. Observations and communication by administrators was limited. Some participants reported the special education managers were overworked, which limited their ability to visit classrooms. Special education administrators relied on the direct support providers to communicate progress and evaluate special education programs. Meetings and emails were used as a source to implement management, supervision, and evaluation of special education programs. The limited visibility of special education administrators was another barrier to special education students needs not being met.

Management, supervision, and evaluation by special education administrators appeared to be a difficult question for participants to answer. Participants were unable to identify how special education administrators manage, supervise, and evaluate special education programs. Many of the participants reported limited visibility of special education administrators. Participants reported having minimal to no contact with the administrators, which did not allow them to identify how they manage, supervise, or evaluate. Administrators reported conducting observations, reviewing data collection, meeting with staff to obtain information to evaluate special education programs. Direct support staff and parents appear to be unaware on how special education administrators manage, supervise, or evaluate special education programs. Administrators use the information gathered by direct support staff to evaluate special programs.

Special education administrators identified evaluation frequency of special education programs as monthly. Direct support staff and parents were unable to identify the frequency of evaluation of special education programs. Some parents reported and shared negative experiences about special education programs. These same parents stated special education programs are not evaluated enough. A need for more evaluation of special education programs appears to be evident based on parent responses. Administrators reported they submit data from students IEP's regularly as one of the ways special education programs are evaluated. Direct support providers reported meeting with special education administrators to discuss their services. This serves as an evaluative tool for special education programs. Identifying how and when special education programs are evaluated is helpful for all participants in the IEP process.

Interview findings appeared to have a range of perspectives based on the role held within special education programs. Each sample group appeared to have similar responses as related to their role and a few similarities across groups. Themes found in the interviews identified some

barriers in special education programs which could be causing students needs to not be met fully. This case study was exploratory and limited to only one county in Northern California. The responses may be similar or different if expanded to other counties and states. Interviews provided a glimpse of potential barriers impacting special education programs.

Summary of Findings

Findings provided detailed and specific perspectives shared by IEP team members. Administrators, teachers, paraeducators, service providers, and parents serving and involved in special education programs shared their own experience within special education programs. Participants openly shared their experience as they know and saw it in special education. The perspectives provided a brief synopsis of potential barriers impacting special education programs. These barriers could lead to students needs not being met in special education programs. The study did not prove that students' needs are not being met, but explored the possibility that special education programs may need some additional training and support to meet students' needs.

Implications and Recommendations

Implications

Educational leaders, educators, and all education stakeholders should value the results found in this study. The results explored how special education programs are meeting the needs of students with disabilities. In the United States, many of the educational reforms are focused and centered on general education academic achievement. Special education students appear to be excluded in these reforms. In the entire Blueprint of Reform, students' with disabilities was mentioned in a brief paragraph to describe the supports the US Department of Education is allocating to special education programs. These implications should drive everyone involved in

education to take a closer look at the needs of students, not just students in the general education program.

Participants in the case study reported they need more support than they are receiving. Professional development is needed based on the participants' responses. Leadership programs for administrators must not just be given, but enforced by the US Office of Special Education. The US Office of Special Education should be directly enforcing that ALL states are in IDEA compliance and knowledgeable of all regulations. ALL special education personnel and families should be able to identify their leader and describe how they manage, supervise, and evaluate special education programs. Participants need direction, assistance, and funds to address the themes found in this study.

Recommendations

Recommendations have been derived from this study. Below are recommendations to change special education programs:

1. **Special Education Administrators should consider conducting an annual or semi-annual physical classroom site visits to be included into the evaluation process of special education programs.**

   Physical site visits to special education classrooms appeared to be missing in the evaluation process. Participants in this study reported limited visibility from special education administrators and they were unclear on how or when evaluation of special education programs occurred. Visiting special education classroom sites would be beneficial to evaluating special education programs. The new Blueprint Reform is focusing on higher teacher quality, but does not include direct classroom visits of special education programs by OSEP. The US Department

of Education must include more collaboration with OSERS and OSEP to ensure evaluation data is gathered by actual classroom observations not just teacher report, which is added on an IEP.

2. **Additional professional development trainings should be available to special education personnel and families, specifically addressing special education regulations, special education roles and responsibilities, and IEP process.**

   Most of the participants in this study appeared to either have limited access or were unable to attend professional development trainings within the last three years. Special education administrators appeared to be the primary group who had attended several trainings in the last 3 years. Most special education administrators attended 20 or more professional development trainings in the last 3 years. Unfortunately, special education administrators do not directly serve the students and they rarely visit classrooms based on participant responses. Paraeducators and parents had the least amount of professional development trainings in the last 3 years. Paraeducators serve as direct support personnel to students and parents' role appears to be more in an advocacy role, which may explain the parents limited access to professional development trainings. The study did not show the reason why direct support providers had limited or no professional development trainings, but based on the findings these participants need to attend more professional development trainings. Professional development trainings are offered throughout the school year in the county where the study was conducted. The researcher reviewed the professional development catalog in this study's county and found many of the trainings were cancelled, offered to designated personnel, or offered during school hours. The county did not provide information on why trainings were cancelled, offered during school hours, or only offered to specific personnel. Providing professional development training only during the school day and voluntary participation in the trainings offered keep personnel from

fully benefitting from needed training. Also, there were no trainings offered and/or geared to special education families' needs. Parents would need to research outside sources to access any special education trainings that may be beneficial to their needs. Participants identified in their questionnaires missing trainings in special education, which demonstrates another need for more professional development trainings. US Department of Education is requiring more professional development trainings be offered in the general education sector, this requirement should be extended to special education programs too, (US Department of Education, 2013).

3. **School district should consider developing a Special Education Fundamentals Manual.** Participants provided special education fundamental knowledge based on their own experience and education. Some of the participant's responses were similar, but some were significantly different based on the role held within special education programs. The findings suggest a need for more clarity about the fundamentals of special education. Each Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) provides a Local Plan, which outlines the expected implementation IDEA in that county's special education program, (OSERS, 2013). This local plan is accessible to anyone via Internet or at the county's local SELPA office for review. The plan outlines all the IDEA regulations as related to the special education program to ensure all students with disabilities receives FAPE. Unfortunately, this Local Plan does not appear to outline special education fundamentals for all special education personnel and families. The researcher found that not every SELPA had the same Local Plan and not all of them were accessible even within the same state. This is because each SELPA must focus on the needs and resources of their own SELPA. Developing one uniform Special Education Fundamentals Manual serving all special education programs in the United States would minimize or eliminate any uncertainty of the implementation of IDEA in the school system. A uniform manual allows special education

providers and families to understand the same special education fundamentals in any State in the United States. Currently, the diversity and variance of each Local Plan causes a lack of clarity and understanding of special education regulations. Each participant response varied to some degree and minimal similarities appeared to yield a significant gap in understanding special education fundamentals. School district and special education department should develop a uniform Special Education Fundamentals Manual to eliminate the lack of clarity and understanding of the implementation of the IDEA regulations to ensure FAPE for all students with disabilities in the United States.

4. **School district should identify an effective leadership model for special education Administrators, which includes administrators being more visible in special education programs.**

   Participants in this study were unable to identify a theoretical leadership model listed in Ch. 2 or any kind of theoretical model. They shared descriptions of leadership style based on their own experience or lack of experience. All participants excluding the administrators shared, that there is a limited visibility of special education administrators in special education programs. This limited visibility could explain the participant responses about leadership styles of special education administrators. Participants were not able to identify the leadership style of special education administrators because they rarely see the administrator. The response shared about the leadership styles varied based on role and experience. There are several theoretical leadership styles that could be adopted for special education administrators. Many of the participants shared possible leadership styles through their descriptions of their experience with special education administrators, but one common factor is there is need for more visibility by special education

administrators. Special education administrators should consider incorporating or identifying a leadership model that includes more visibility.

5. **School district should outline how special education administrators manage, supervise, and evaluate special education programs and that information should be disseminated to special education personnel and families.**

   Special education administrators in each district of every state serve as the direct managers of special education programs in their districts. OSERS and OSEP operate on a federal level, the State Department of Special Education operates at a state level, and each SELPA operates at a local level, (OSERS, 2013). None of these departments directly manage the "actual special education classrooms" in each district. In this study, many of the participants including the special education administrators were unable to identify how special education administrators manage, supervise, and evaluate special education programs. Special Education Administrators, special education personnel, and parents were unable to describe or explain the management styles, supervision models, or evaluation skills used by special education administrators. Participants appeared to share their own experience. No guidelines or regulations about management, supervision, and evaluation methods could be identified in any of the researched educational regulations found in Chapter 2. Special education departments in each district should identify management, supervision, and evaluation methods of special education administrators. This information can be developed into an administrator action plan, which can be included in the Special Education Fundamentals Manual, recommended by this researcher. Developing administrative responsibilities as to management, supervision, and evaluation may improve special education program performance. Requiring special education administrators to

implement specific management, supervision, and evaluation methods could keep school district in IDEA compliance.

6. **School district should offer additional parent trainings.**

Parents reported having limited access to special education trainings. Parents are requesting more access to special education programs, which can help them meet the needs of their child. The US Department of Education has stated their mission is to be a partner with parents, (US Department of Education, 2013). Parent involvement was listed under NCLB regulations as a primary factor to ensure academic success for students in the United States, (US Department of Education, 2013). Parental involvement in education was one of the 4 principles listed in the NCLB regulations, (US Department of Education, 2013). OSEP has Parent Centers located in each state to help parents advocate for their child by ensuring implementation of their child's IEP. These parent centers are educated and trained on IDEA regulations and offer support groups for parents. Each SELPA distributes parent center information to their districts to be disseminated to parents in their districts. Some of these Parent Centers offer trainings or provide resources to trainings in their local area for parents. Unfortunately, not all parents are aware of or how to access these Parent Centers. Parents reported being given limited access to resources or trainings to help assist them with their child. Parents are often researching these Parent Centers on their own without the help from the district special education personnel or the SELPA. Parents reported they are often fighting for services and ensuring the IEP is implemented for their child regularly. Many of the parents shared negative experiences with special education administrators and expressed having limited knowledge on how these administrators manage, supervise, or evaluate special education programs. These parents stressed the need for more evaluation and supervision, as they felt there is not enough occurring in their child's current program. Educating

parents on special education regulations, administration, services, and implementation could change parents' responses and involvement in special education programs.

7. **Ongoing research and data collection must be collected to determine how to implement the above recommendations.**

   Upon conducting the literature review and this study, the researcher found limited to no information directly linked to special education programs. Many research studies focused on litigation, research-based practices, and specific disabilities. Special education programs were not researched based on program achievement and meeting students' needs. This study serves as a gateway to the need for further research of special education programs in the United States. The results warrant another extensive look into how special education programs are being operated in the US school systems.

8. **School district should identify and evaluate how funds are being utilized directly for special education classrooms and special education personnel training.**

   US Department of Education allocates discretionary funds to each state to help assist them in implementing IDEA regulations through FAPE in each district, (US Department of Education, 2013). OSEP reports providing Part B grants to each state to support early intervention and programs for individuals with disabilities, (OSERS, 2013). California received over $10 billion in Part B grants for the 2013-2014 school year, (OSERS, 2013). Unfortunately, the funding tables provided do not specifically state how each individual SELPA and district utilize their funds for all their special education classrooms, (OSERS, 2013). The SELPA's Local Plan includes a section how the methods of distributing funds are allocated from state and federal funds. An annual budget is to be developed to outline how the funds are used. In this study's county Local Plan, there was no direct information included in the budget on how classrooms are

funded. The plan discusses how services, supplemental aides and services needed to meet the needs of individuals placed in regular classrooms or environments, and for regionalized operations and services by program specialists. Specifically, identifying how funds are distributed to assist special education classrooms and their personnel would help meet the needs of the students. Funds should be distributed to classrooms by including professional development trainings and any additional academic materials needed for students placed in special education classrooms, not just for the students placed in general education classes.

While preparing for this case study, I developed a leadership model that could benefit special education programs. The leadership model is called Behavioral Classroom Management Strategies Leadership Model. The model is focused on training, evaluation, management, and supervision of all special education services and supports. Special education programs are centered on the students' individual needs within the classroom or in the community. Each student has a different program, which means the Special Education Administrator must be knowledgeable in all types of programs a student may participate in, to truly oversee and enforce all IDEA regulations. Below is a brief description of the model:

Behavioral Classroom Management Strategies Leadership Model

The behavioral classroom management strategies leadership model is designed to assist and train special education professionals. This leadership model addresses issues related to a special needs students' behavior in the classroom and curriculum design. The leader's role is to provide direct supervision and training to all special education personnel and other stakeholders. The supervision will include monthly meetings with classrooms, classroom observations, weekly behavioral plan checklists, evaluations, and behavioral trainings.

Model Goals

The Behavioral Classroom Management Strategies Leadership Model has 5 goals.

Goal #1: Special education administrators will lead with respect, confidence, and expecting the best of all employees.

Goal #2: Special education administrators will educate employees about policies and regulations to ensure excellent employee performance.

Goal #3: Special education administrators will train staff in and implement research-based educational strategies to meet accountability standards.

Goal #4: Special education administrators will support employees based on performance.

Goal #5: Special education administrators will collaborate with all employees to provide quality programs within the organization.

Model Design

The model design details specific administrative procedures. All special education managers will provide direct supervision to all employees. Special education administrators will collect ongoing assessment of academic and employee performance. Ongoing trainings targeting specific content related to the employees' current performance would be provided by the special education administrators. Incentive programs to motivate and reinforce all employees applying and implementing research-based educational practices will be given consistently on a monthly basis by special education administrators. Experts in the related fields will present mandatory trainings for curriculum, behavior management, and physical interventions to all employees serving in special education programs. Evaluation methods to address the employee performance and progress will be performed on a monthly and annual basis determined by the level of performance of the employee.

The leadership model described is one example of what is needed in special education programs. The participants shared through the questionnaire and interview their own needs within special education. One underlying theme not addressed directly was funding. I did not ask participants about funding, but some participants expressed brief comments leading to a potential discussion about funding in special education. Separate funding is allocated to the Special Education Departments in the United States (US Department of Education, 2013). These funds are primarily used for personnel, services, and programs in special education departments (US Department of Education, 2013). Funding for education is an ongoing debate in the US and continues to be questioned on how funds are "really" being used in education.

Educational leaders in the United States should use these findings to begin evaluating special education programs. If general education students' are performing poorly, how are special education students' performing? Special education is rarely discussed in any of the Educational Reform, yet these programs are funded from the US Department of Education to succeed as the general education programs. Educational leaders must begin to address special education needs in collaboration with general education needs.

Suggestions for Further Research

Currently, special education research has been primarily focused on IEP compliance and research-based treatments only (OSERS, 2013). Minimal to no research has been conducted on the evaluation of "actual" special education programs, meaning classroom evaluation. Based on the litigation studies, special education programs are not consistently operating in compliance with IDEA regulations, (OSERS, 2013). Several research-based strategies have been developed to support students' with disabilities, yet special education personnel and families have limited

access to be trained on these strategies. The results demonstrate a need for further research in the following areas:

1. Evaluation of special education programs
2. Evaluation of special education administrators and personnel
3. Determining progress in special education programs
4. Evaluation of IDEA regulations and enforcement
5. Impact of special education programs on professional development, personal lives, and health
6. Evaluate professional development programs in special education programs
7. Evaluate what trainings are offered to special education personnel and families
8. Determine how funds are distributed and utilized in special education programs

These suggestions will provide an accurate account of what is missing in special education and how to improve these programs.

Chapter Summary And Dissertation Summary

Chapter 5 detailed and summarized the findings of the case study. Findings were identified in Chapter 4, which resulted in a need for specific recommendations to the leaders in education. The themes found in this study provided an introduction into the evaluation of special education programs at a classroom level. Special education is monitored at a federal, state, and local level, but limited direct evaluation of classrooms is occurring inconsistently. OSERS and OSEP monitor and ensure IDEA regulations are implemented, but they primarily collaborate with the state departments of special education and minimal interactions at the local level, (OSERS, 2013). Data is collected by each state and submitted to OSERS to ensure IDEA compliance, (OSERS, 2013). Unfortunately, local evaluation is limited and rarely occurring

within each district per participant responses, so how does OSERS deem the data collected is valid? More direct classroom observations paired with reviewing student's IEP goals by special education administrators would provide a more valid and accurate representation of IEP implementation. OSERS and OSEP may not be able to visit sites directly, but should be enforcing that this occurs at a local level to ensure valid results. The researcher did not find any information supporting or stating that special education administrators are required to conduct direct classroom observations, which raises concern about the evaluation of special education programs. Participants reported limited visibility by the special education administrators, which suggests the data collected from this sample for evaluations of special education programs may not be valid. California was cited in 2011 for 6 IDEA compliance issues, yet there is no additional report found on OSERS or CA Department of Special Education sites, reporting any changes or improvements yielding the state now being compliant in 2013, (OSERS, 2013). Special education information is not accessible to the lay person and is almost impossible to research without additional support from someone working in the field. Identifying accurate information about special education is often out dated and no follow up results are to be found. A primary question was posed in this study, Why are special education students' needs not being met? Based on these findings, the researcher and the participants are unable to determine if the students' needs are being met or not met. The findings identified specific barriers that may be interfering with student needs being met. Based on the participants' responses supervision of special education programs appeared to be minimal and a shared responsibility among case managers and administrators. Unfortunately, no supervision methods were described. Special education programs need to be directly evaluated consistently at a district level using a specific

evaluation method enforced by the US Department of Education, OSERS, OSEP, State Department of Education, the State Special Education Division and the local SELPA.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT: PARTICIPANTS 18 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is **NAME** and I am a student at the University of Phoenix working on a EDD Educational Leadership degree. I am conducting a research study entitled ***A Qualitative Case Study: Why Are Special Education Students' Needs Not Being Met?*** The purpose of the research study is to explore possible problems with supervision of special education programs by special education administrators.

Your participation will involve providing your professional or personal experiences with special education administrators. This information will be gathered through interviews and questionnaires. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, you can do so without penalty or loss of benefit to yourself. The results of the research study may be published but your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be disclosed to any outside party.

In this research, there are no foreseeable risks to you. Your identity will remain confidential and protected by this researcher. A coding system will be used to remove any identifying markers to protect your identity.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, a possible benefit of your participation is to helping special education administrators' improve their supervisory skills, which will help special education students' needs be met in all special education programs.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at **PHONE** and my email address is EMAIL ADDRESS.

As a participant in this study, you should understand the following:

1. You may decline to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without consequences.
2. Your identity will be kept confidential.
3. The researcher has thoroughly explained the parameters of the research study and all of your questions and concerns have been addressed.
4. The interviews will be recorded, you must grant permission for the researcher to digitally record the interview. You understand that the information from the recorded interviews may be transcribed. The researcher will structure a coding process to assure that anonymity of your name is protected.
5. Data will be stored in a secure and locked area. The data will be held for a period of three years, and then destroyed.
6. The research results will be used for publication.

"By signing this form you acknowledge that you understand the nature of the study, the potential risks to you as a participant, and the means by which your identity will be kept confidential. Your signature on this form also indicates that you are 18 years old or older and that you give your permission to voluntarily serve as a participant in the study described."

Signature of the interviewee _____ Date _____

Signature of the researcher _____ Date _____

Appendix B

Dissertation Questionnaire

Research Study Questionnaire: WHY ARE SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS' NEEDS NOT BEING MET?

Date: _____

Participant: _____

Please Print Clearly, Legible, & within Space Given!

Questions	**Responses**
What is your position or role in Special Education program?	
How long have you been involved in Special Education programs?	
What is your level of education?	
How many professional development trainings have you attended in the last 3 years?	
Does your current position or role in special education require you to attend trainings?	
What instructional style of training do you prefer?	
Do you prefer visual supports in trainings?	
Do you prefer application-based trainings?	
Do you review training materials and information	
What types of trainings do you think are missing	

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Dissertation Interview Questions

Interview Questions (15)

1. What is your role and responsibilities within Special Education programs?
2. Describe the IEP process?
3. Who are the team members in the IEP?
4. How is the IEP implemented in Special Education programs?
5. What strategies do you use to ensure the IEP is implemented?
6. Describe the current Special Education program you are involved in?
7. What is the eligibility criterion for a student to receive Special Education services?
8. What types of Special Education services are offered to students?
9. How is Special Education services delivered to students?
10. Who manages Special Education services and programs? Describe what you have experienced.
11. What is the leadership style of Special Education Administrators?
12. How do Special Education Administrators manage, supervise, and evaluate Special Education services and programs?
13. How often do Special Education Administrators meet to evaluate Special Education services and programs?
14. How did you get involved in Special Education programs?
15. How do Special Education programs impact your life?

Appendix D

Participant Coding System

Categories	**005**	**006**	**007**	**008**	**009**
Administrators	AD005	AD006	AD007	AD008	AD009
Special Ed. Teachers	SE005	SE006	SE007	SE008	SE009
Paraeducators	PE005	PE006	PE007	PE008	PE009
Service Providers	SP005	SP006	SP007	SP008	SP009
Parents	P005	P006	P007	P008	P009