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The Role of County Offices of Education in Supporting District Superintendent Effectiveness

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The Role of County Offices of Education in Supporting

District Superintendent Effectiveness

A Dissertation by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

February 6, 2023

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February 2023

The Role of County Offices of Education in Supporting District Superintendent

Effectiveness

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This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Todd H. Tomeo, without whom I would have never finished this doctoral program. You are my favorite person in the world, and I am so thankful that we are on life's journey together.

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ABSTRACT

The Role of County Offices of Education in Supporting

District Superintendent Effectiveness

by Carol D. Tomeo

Purpose: The purpose of this parallel comparative Delphi study was to first identify the

services provided by the County Office of Education (COE) to district superintendents

that ensured their successful job performance from the perspective of both county

superintendents/designees and district superintendents. Additionally, it sought to rate the

importance of the identified services, identify the best methods of providing those

services, and identify the rationale for each service provider method from both

perspectives. The final purpose was to compare the results from both groups to determine

alignment and efficacy.

Methodology: This study used a parallel comparative Delphi method that consisted of

four rounds of questioning sent to county superintendents/designees and district

superintendents. In Round 1, respondents were asked to identify the services provided by

the COE that supported district superintendent job success. In Round 2, panelists were

asked to rate the importance of those services utilizing a Likert scale. In Round 3,

respondents were asked to identify the best service delivery methods for each service

provided. In Round 4, participants were asked to provide a rationale for their choice of

service delivery methods. In Round 5, the responses of the two groups were compared.

Findings: Each group chose two common service areas: budget/finance services and

support and superintendent training and support. District superintendents ranked the

importance of both service areas much lower than the COE superintendents/designees,

and some respondents indicated a lack of confidence in COEs' ability to provide those services. Additionally, there was a misalignment of responses in how to provide those services and why those delivery methods were chosen.

Conclusion: To ensure district superintendent effectiveness, COEs must provide services to districts in the following areas: a mentor or coach for district superintendents, and district specific training and support especially for smaller districts who lack resources. Finally, COEs must build and sustain trusting relationships with district superintendents.

Recommendations: Based on the findings of this study, three recommendations were proposed for further consideration and study in order to address the issue of district superintendent support by their COE.

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CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW

Introduction

The average K-12 district superintendent turnover rate in the United States is between 14- 16% annually, with a mean tenure of between 5-6 years (Kowalski, 2011). As reported in a 2020 study by the American Association of School Administrators, 59.5% of superintendents planned to remain in their role for at least 5 years, whereas approximately 40% saw themselves retired or working in a different educational area (Rogers & Tienken, 2020). Many studies have weighed in on the factors that lead to superintendent turnover and longevity, and the challenges that superintendents face vary from state to state (Björk, Browne-Ferrigno, & Kowalski, 2014; Mouton, 2013; Sparks, 2012).

In California, 45% of all district superintendents and 71% of large district superintendents left their positions between 2006-2009 (Frey, 2012). Few studies have focused on the reasons behind such departures, and whether they are due to retirement or resignation (Grissom & Andersen, 2012). Even less is known about whether those retirements and resignations are forced or chosen intentionally. What is known is that with lack of stability at the district office, new initiatives usually fail to take root and grow (Sparks, 2012).

Both internal and external factors cause superintendents to leave their professions. Rapidly changing political, social, and economic landscapes contribute to their exit (Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Tekniepe, 2015). Additionally, stress from the pressures of home and work life, as well as a lack of mentorship, contribute to the phenomenon

(Hawk & Martin, 2011). As a result, superintendents are likely to develop poor relationships with the district's Board of Education (BOE; Grier, 2015).

Recent research has revealed significant factors that lead to superintendent effectiveness (Harmeier, 2016; Melton, Reeves, McBrayer, & Smith, 2019). These factors are not necessarily characteristics of the person, but rather outside factors contributing to their success. Cuban (2008) stated that in order for superintendents to be effective in their positions, it is vital that they are the *right fit* for the learning community. Additionally, adequate preparation in the form of managerial experience, rather than traditional academic preparation, was a key to success for superintendents in rural areas (Petersen, Fusarelli, & Kowalski, 2008). Finally, it is imperative that superintendents know and be able to successfully navigate the community, district, and BOE politics. The success of any initiative proposed by a superintendent depends directly on their ability to work through and with others (Hill & Jochim, 2018). Building capacity in their district leaders, developing strategic thinking and vision, and building communication and relationships with all stakeholders are also key characteristics of effective superintendents (ECRA Group, 2010; Kriesky, 2018; Moore, 2012).

What is the purpose of California's County Offices of Education (COEs) supporting the success of their district superintendents? State-mandated business and organizational imperatives include services to ensure their districts and district superintendents are successful (Manansala & Cottingham, 2019). In a historical speech given to county superintendents in 1958, Trillingham described a wide range of services that county superintendents can and should offer to their district leaders. This need for services is further supported by Lindsey and MacDonell's (2011) research, which

indicated that county superintendents should provide avenues for district superintendents' professional development. Scant research exists on the range of services offered by each county superintendent, the effectiveness of services provided, and their subsequent effect on district superintendents' successful job performance.

Background

The Role of the Superintendent

Across the United States, BOEs employ superintendents to manage, lead, and execute the functions of key parts of district operations. Recruitment, financial oversight, curriculum, and the development of a successful work environment are all aspects of their scope of work (Grissom & Andersen, 2012). Another critical area under their purview is student achievement. At one time, this was their primary concern; however, they are now grappling with the district's full functions, and are struggling with the management of so many crucial moving parts (Tekniepe, 2015).

Superintendent Turnover

In a 2018 survey of 100 of the nation's largest school districts, the average length of tenure for school superintendents was found to be just over 6.5 years. However, in those same districts, 23% of superintendents were in their positions for less than 3 years (The Broad Center, 2018). In a 2020 study, 59% of superintendents belonging to the American Association of School Administrators predicted that they would still be in their positions in 5 years (Tienken & Domenech, 2021). Because school initiatives and reforms take at least 5-7 years to take root, it is unlikely that superintendents would be able to make lasting policy changes in such a short time frame (Freedberg & Collier, 2016).

In contrast, a 2016 study conducted in California found that more than half of the state's 30 largest districts had superintendents who had tenures of less than 3 years. Additionally, only nine superintendents had been on the job for more than 5 years (Freedberg & Collier, 2016). A similar study found that in the largest districts (29,000 or more students), the turnover rate was 71% after 3 years on the job (Sparks, 2012).

Reasons for California's high turnover rate vary. BOE dysfunction was found to be the primary reason for superintendent turnover. In other words, BOEs that could not work together well also could not work well with their superintendents (Sparks, 2012). Nationally, rural superintendents have also faced political conflict in their bids to stay in their positions. The added pressure of the fiscal stress caused by having a small constituency tax base with less state and federal funds has also led to high turnover rates in smaller districts (Tekniepe, 2015).

County Offices of Education

In the middle of the 20th century, state governments eliminated over 100,000 school districts in an effort to support rural school children with access to quality education. To replace these districts, many COEs took over leadership responsibilities to ensure access for their students (Pisapia, 2014). As of December 2022, across the United States, there were approximately 14,178 public school systems, of which 1,298 have a dependent governance system. These types of system are reliant and fully managed by state, county, municipal, or town agencies. The majority of COEs appear in North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, California, and New Jersey (Geverdt, 2018).

Purpose and function. Historically, COEs are created by the state government and exist as a necessary support for districts. They perform fiscal oversight, provide

special education services to districts, offer students in the juvenile court systems access to education, and serve as a comprehensive resource for districts. Additionally, their work is essential in compliance monitoring of state funding and programs and can serve as a pass-through for state funding resources (Manansala & Cottingham, 2019).

California COEs

The state constitution of California has established 58 COEs, each of which has its own superintendent. Of these superintendents, 53 are elected by the voters of that county, and five are hired by a BOE (M. Taylor, 2017). The role of the COE in California mirrors the roles of COEs across the nation.

Services Provided by COEs

As a school district's needs under the COEs' purview have changed, so have the services provided by COEs (Manansala & Cottingham, 2019). The size of the district is a factor that affects which and how many services are offered. California's counties have student enrollments as low as 100 and as high as 1.6 million (ED100, 2019). Regardless of the district's size, however, COEs provide oversight and assistance. As Trillingham (1958) stated, "Our job is to serve the districts, not to run them" (p. 280).

Differentiated assistance. In the effort to mandate continuous improvement for schools, the United States Department of Education provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) that have high numbers of children in poverty. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes Title I, Part A, which is a formula-based grant that targets LEAs that have students who are at risk of failing to meet academic standards. Through the state's education department, LEAs that have been identified as underperforming are offered differentiated assistance to address their performance issues.

Through ESSA, COEs support LEAs that fall into this category by providing resources and helping evaluate the circumstances that led to their students not meeting educational targets (California Department of Education [CDE], 2021b).

Fiscal oversight. Changes in fiscal oversight and the implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula and Local Control Accountability Plans have forced a movement toward providing more targeted support and services from COEs (M. Taylor, 2017). Although each COE has differing support levels, they are tasked with successfully implementing each plan and having regulatory oversight.

Professional development. Due to the heightened focus on the benefits of professional development for teachers and principals (Marzano & Waters, 2005), there has also been a rise in the types and frequency of professional development provided, including mentorship of district superintendents (Lindsey & MacDonell, 2011). Indeed, many California COEs offer coaching or mentoring services to their novice district superintendents (Harmeier, 2016). The amount of professional development offered varies greatly depending on the county's size and the number of districts in it (M. Taylor, 2017).

College and career readiness. The COE also serves as a bridge between legislation and its adoption. California has adopted Common Core standards that address the need for college and career readiness and the state has provided funding to support those programs. What is not clear is how the plan can and should be implemented. This lack of planning has led to the need for the COE to bridge the gap and provide the needed oversight and implementation strategies to ensure access for all students (Lewis, Nodine, & Veneziz, 2017).

Special education. Special education in California began as a loose patchwork of targeted services offered by disability type without an overarching framework. In 1980, the state developed a new system of Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) that allowed smaller districts to receive student access and services through COEs (Anderson, 2018). The California Department of Education (CDE, 2021a) reported that 132 SELPAs are operating in the state, and each must be approved and monitored by its local COE.

California COE Superintendents

In California, there are 58 COE superintendents. Each one is tasked with fiscal oversight of all their districts, visitations at every school district and site, submission of an annual report on the state of district schools, ensuring the distribution of new state and federal laws, and the submission of various reports to the CDE (H. M. Edwards, 2014).

To perform these duties, the superintendent does not need to have an educational background. Unlike teachers and principals, superintendents do not need to have state credentials, although most do (EdSource, 2007). Although they may not have expertise in every area of school management and leadership, they do have access to the resources needed to support their district superintendents (Plank, O'Day, & Cottingham, 2018).

California District Superintendents

According to the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA, 2017) there are 1,025 school districts in the state of California, and approximately as many district superintendents. Their primary focus is to lead and manage fiscal, personnel, and site resources for the betterment of their students and stakeholders (ECRA Group, 2010). In addition, new leadership and learning theories

include the need for a vision, strong and frequent communication, and political acumen (Antonucci, 2012; EdSource, 2007; Harmeier, 2016; Henry & Reidy, 2005).

District superintendents in California are hired by the Board of Education and tasked with carrying out the Board's decisions. In carrying out their initiatives, superintendents are placed in a position that requires them to balance all stakeholders' needs as well as simultaneously increase student achievement (EdSource, 2007). Although the majority of district superintendents have an educational background and follow the teacher-to-administrator pipeline, they are often left without a coaching or mentoring support system and can be unprepared for the role they have assumed (Antonucci, 2012; Dabney-Lieras, 2009).

Factors That Affect Superintendent Effectiveness and Job Performance

Many factors contribute to the success of a district superintendent. For example, it is imperative that the superintendent understands the community's history and what led up to their hiring (Fusarelli, 2006). Not knowing the community landscape and how to ingratiate themselves with the local population will affect their success. Although some factors can be mitigated through education and training of the administrator, others are external and often not under their control.

Inadequate preparation. Adequate preparation in the form of managerial experience, rather than the traditional academic preparation, is also key to success for superintendents (Petersen et al., 2008). According to Manca, Noonan, and Matranga (1999) superintendents lacking training in fiscal services are a "recipe for financial disaster" (p. 379). Indeed, the 2006 American Association of School Administrators member survey indicated that 36% of BOE members believe that managerial skills in

fiscal matters is the most important preparation for new superintendents (Glass & Francheschini, 2007).

Professional development. There is ample data to support the need for professional development for teachers and principals (Dabney-Lieras, 2009; Miller, 2020; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Superintendents need professional learning as well. Although this learning can take many forms, there is consensus that superintendents must participate in ongoing training and learning, especially those new to the profession (Harmeier, 2016; Orr, 2007; Petersen et al., 2008).

Being the right fit. Cuban (2008) asserted that in order for superintendents to be effective in their positions, it is vital that they are the *right fit* for the learning community. The new superintendent's leadership style must match the expectations of the BOE in order for them to be successful (Macaluso, 1993). Being the right fit, a crucial factor in superintendent success, can be assured as long as the superintendent candidate does his/her research before interviewing for and accepting a position (Grier, 2015).

Navigating politics. A recent American Association of School Administrators (2016) study found that 88% of district superintendents self-reported that politics was the strongest external mitigating factor related to success in their profession. Good political influences are quite difficult to maneuver, especially if the reforms the superintendent puts into place are unpopular. As Hill and Jochim (2018) stated, "superintendents can accomplish very little without gaining the cooperation of others who aren't compelled to go along" (p. 1).

Communication and relationship building. Building capacity and social capital in their organizations is another vital skill set that superintendents must possess.

According to Ripley, Mitchell, and Richman (2013), creating effective social networks and building social capital can bridge the divide when establishing new programs or initiatives. By focusing on relationships, the superintendent can avoid missteps during transitions and other challenging circumstances. Kriesky (2018) echoed Ripley et al., asserting further that superintendent longevity is based on relationships. He stated that "long serving superintendents attribute their longevity to specific communication and relationship-building behaviors" (p. 2).

Executive coaching. In her thesis, Harmeier's (2016) major findings included the need for superintendents to receive executive coaching and mentorship from trusted, experienced coaches who themselves had superintendent experience. This type of support is seen as impactful and valuable to new superintendents because it is customized for their individual needs (Antonucci, 2012). Although the benefits may not be tied directly to student achievement, coaching is linked to increasing the skill sets of school superintendents and helping them achieve their goals (Pardini, 2003).

Board relations. The BOE plays a vital role in supporting the superintendent they hired. The ideal situation is for the Board of Governance and the superintendent to work together as a team to improve their schools, build community confidence in their shared leadership and stewardship of student education, and increase student success and achievement. When the superintendent does a poor job of developing relationships with the district's BOE, the superintendent may fail to achieve his/her goals (Grier, 2015). One of the key factors in a superintendent's departure is poor board relations, a predictor of failure and a rationale for superintendent turnover in most districts (Grissom & Andersen, 2012).

The support that COEs provide to their districts is based on district size and location, as well as available resources (Manansala & Cottingham, 2019). National superintendent turnover is at a rate of 23% every 3 years (The Broad Center, 2018). Therefore, it is vital for COEs to provide direct and systematic services to their districts. The development of support systems for school improvement will likely become the responsibility of COEs superintendents as well (Plank et al., 2018).

Statement of Research Problem

The job of a district superintendent is difficult and fraught with fiscal, political, and community pressures. There is evidence that the high turnover rate in California district superintendent positions is based on these pressures, creating cause for concern (The Broad Center, 2018; Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Rogers, 2020). With the average tenure of large school district superintendent   s being roughly 3 years and true change in policies and practices taking at least 5-7 years, it remains highly unlikely that these educational leaders will be able to make lasting and positive changes to their districts (Freedberg & Collier, 2016; Sparks, 2012). Whether through the superintendent's own choices and initiatives or the BOE's policies and directives, those who choose this occupation will face many internal and external struggles in their bid to be successful (Sparks, 2012; M. Taylor, 2017; Tekniepe, 2015).

Many examples in the literature detail the positive experiences of district superintendents who participated in executive coaching as a form of professional development (Lindsey & MacDonell, 2011; Orr, 2007; Petersen et al., 2008). Their research shows that a mentor or coach has lasting effects on superintendent longevity and

job satisfaction (Harmeier, 2016; Pardini, 2003; Petersen et al., 2008). There is also a connection between a superintendent's positive experiences with coaching or mentoring and their willingness to provide those services to their leadership teams (Marzano & Waters, 2005; Orr, 2007). Training in fiscal oversight, BOE relations, special education, and other areas has been shown to promote the success of district superintendents (Glass & Franchescini, 2007; Manca et al., 1999; M. Taylor, 2017). However, the availability of these services varies from county to county.

COEs in California provide oversight in some of these policy areas and are responsible at least in part for the success of the districts in their purview (Plank et al., 2019; M. Taylor, 2017). Their role is to report to the CDE on the solvency of their school districts, as well as to monitor their progress on state educational goals (ECRA Group, 2010; H. M. Edwards, 2014). The COE superintendent, the head of the COE, plays a pivotal role in guiding district superintendents and ensuring their success (CCESE, 2017; Zachry, 2010). These county superintendents determine the scope of services offered by their organizations, and each has their own list of priorities in the assistance they provide (Plank et al., 2018).

However, there is a lack of research on the types of services that district superintendents believe would benefit them, compared to what their COE superintendents think they need   and are offering. The awareness of what trainings superintendents think are most effective and advantageous to their success as a district leader would benefit COEs in their attempt to provide meaningful services to school districts. This gap in the research between what is provided   and what is truly needed served as the basis for this research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this parallel comparative Delphi study was to first identify the services   provided by the COE to district superintendents that ensured their successful job performance from the perspective of both county superintendents/designees and district superintendents. The second purpose was to rate the importance of the identified services from both perspectives. The third was to identify the best methods of providing those services from both perspectives. Fourth, the study sought the rationale for each service provider method. The final purpose was to compare the results from county superintendents/designees to the results from the district superintendents to determine alignment and efficacy.

Research Questions

County Superintendent/Designee

- Round 1: What services do county superintendent/designees identify as important for COEs to provide for district superintendents in their county to ensure their successful job performance?

- Round 2: How do county superintendent/designees rate the importance of the services identified from Research Question 1?

- Round 3: How do county superintendents/designees describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

- Qualitative Round 4: How do county superintendents/designees describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

District Superintendent

- Round 1: What services do district superintendents identify as important for COEs to provide for district superintendents in their county to ensure their successful job performance?

- Round 2: How do district superintendents rate the importance of the services identified from Research Question 1?

- Round 3: How do district superintendents describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

- Qualitative Round 4: How do district superintendents describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

- Round 5: Comparison of responses. How do the results from district superintendent responses compare to the responses from county superintendents/designees?

Significance of the Study

This dual Delphi mixed-methods comparative study strove to define the differences between what county superintendents and district superintendents determine to be important services provided in support of district superintendents. COEs provide direct and intermediate services to districts in fiscal, curricular, special education, as well as technical and Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) assistance (CCSESA, 2017). The rigor of those services varies from county to county, determined by the county's size, location, state funding allocations, and the needs of the districts the COE oversees.

However, longevity in district superintendent positions is a key factor in the success of state, county, and district initiatives (Plank et al., 2018). Because new policies and programs often take up to 7 years to become fully implemented (Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Sparks, 2012), and superintendent turnover can happen as quickly as every 3 years (Freedberg & Collier, 2016), the services and support provided by a COE can be pivotal in a superintendent's success. Knowing exactly which services each district superintendent needs may dramatically reduce the turnover rate and provide educational stability for students, staff, and the community.

The findings from this study will inform county superintendents of desired supports to ensure district success and offer the district superintendents a voice in delegating county resources. The data will also encourage a dialogue between county and district leadership to develop additional services not currently provided and modification of existing services tailored to their specific needs. Because the financial, time, societal, and political cost of replacing a district superintendent represent a high stakes venture for any BOE, the results of this study will be valuable to both county and district leadership (Cunningham & Sperry, 2021; Grissom & Andersen, 2012).

Definitions

Board of Education (BOE)

A BOE is a group of elected public officials that ensures their school district is accountable to the community by setting the direction of the district, establishing structure, providing support, advocating for students and their districts. They may also be responsible for selecting, hiring, and evaluating each district's superintendent (California School Boards Association [CSBA], 2021).

California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA)

The CCESA is an organization that provides support and services to California's 58 COE superintendents (CCSESA, 2017).

California Department of Education (CDE)

The CDE is a statewide public school oversight organization that provides leadership and assistance to COEs, school districts, and charter schools (CDE, 2020).

Compliance Monitoring

Compliance monitoring is a process conducted by COEs that reviews districts budgets and spending to ensure state and federal funds are used legally (CCSESA, 2017).

County Office of Education (COE)

COEs are county-based educational organizations that provide services to their local school districts. A COE provides fiscal oversight of districts budgets, curriculum, school facilities, and staff. They may also provide special education services directly to students and Juvenile Court and community schools, as well as Career Technical Education programs for schools in their local districts (CCSESA, 2017).

County Office of Education (COE) Superintendent Designee

A COE Superintendent Designee is defined as a high-ranking administrator in the COE who is representing the superintendent in their responses to the research questions in this study. They must adhere to the same requirements for participation as the COE superintendent.

County Superintendent of Schools

County superintendents of schools are intermediaries between the state's Department of Education and local school districts that provide direct and regional district support (CCSESA, 2017).

Executive Coaching

Executive coaching is professional coaching provided by an experienced mentor that focuses on the development of the leadership skills necessary to improve district superintendent performance (Harmeier, 2016; Lindsey & MacDonell, 2011).

Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

An LEA is any public authority that controls public schools in a city, county, or school district or any other subdivision of the public school system (EdSource, 2022).

Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP)

An LCAP is a written 3-year plan submitted to the CDE that details the goals of the school district, as well as how their funds will be allocated to promote positive student outcomes (CDE, 2021b).

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)

The LCFF is legislation enacted in 2013 that determines how LEAs across California are funded, the services and support they receive, and how student success is measured (CDE, 2021a).

Pass-through

Pass-through refers to a system in which COEs collect money from local school districts to fund special education services for district students (CDE, 2022a).

Professional Development

Professional development refers to a set of tools, experiences, or learning, that develops and improves an educator's skill set and effectiveness (Antonucci, 2012; ECRA Group, 2010; Harmeier, 2016; Henry & Reidy, 2005; Lindsey & MacDonell, 2011; Marzano & Waters, 2005; Zachry, 2010)

Delimitations

This parallel comparative Delphi study was delimited to California COE superintendents or their designees and California school district superintendents. The participants represent a sampling of these populations.

Organization of the Study

This research study is composed of five chapters, a list of references, and appendices. Chapter I introduced the study and included the background, problem and purpose statements, research questions, and the significance of the study. Chapter II includes a thorough review of the literature that includes the role of COEs in supporting district superintendents, the history of California COEs, county superintendents, district superintendents, and the reasons for superintendent turnover. The methodology of the study is described in Chapter III, including the design of the research, population and sample of the participants, the instrumentation utilized, and the procedures to be used in data collection and analysis. Chapter IV presents a review and an analysis of the data collected in the previous chapter. A summary of the findings and conclusions and their implications, as well as recommendations for further research, are included in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to determine the services and methods of delivery of those services provided to district superintendents by California county superintendents and their effectiveness in preventing district superintendent turnover and promoting overall job success. To achieve this purpose, a dual Delphi study was conducted to compare responses to four research questions. Answers from each group were compared and the data used to determine the levels of alignment and provide guidance for county superintendents in their development of services and support for district superintendents.

This review of literature provides the historical context of educational institutions in the United States, the state of California, and the development of state COEs. Next, the services currently provided by COEs are explored, with particular attention paid to those that support district superintendents. An overview of the purpose and scope of work for county and district superintendents is also provided. Finally, the review of literature concludes with factors that affect the job performance and tenure of district superintendents.

Role of State Governments in Education

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), the United States has over 14,000 public school districts and 1,200 more unincorporated districts that exist under the supervision of the state, county office, or local government. The level of governance of each district depends on the state in which they operate. Every state has an educational organization tasked with providing students an adequate educational system, implementation of educational legislation, fiscal support, and mediation of disputes

between school districts and LEAs (Geverdt, 2018; Manna, 2013; Roe & Herrington, 2021). For some states, that organization is in the form of a Department of Education; for others, the districts are monitored through their COEs or single districts or district conglomerates (Geverdt, 2018; Hendrick & Ortiz, 1986; U.S. Department of Education, 2021b). At the helm of each of those organizations is a leader who is called the state superintendent or chief state school officer (Finn, McGuinn, & Manna, 2013).

State Superintendents/Chief State School Officers of Education

State superintendents of education and their counterparts are responsible for running the state education agency and implementing educational policies (Geverdt, 2018; Manna, 2013). They are either elected by the state populace, appointed by the governor of the state or appointed by the state BOE (Manna, 2013). These leaders work closely with their BOEs, which can also be elected or appointed by the governor (National Association of State Boards of Education [NASBE], 2021). As a governing body, they are tasked with:

- Implementing educational policies set by the state's BOE or federal government
- Designing and implementing strategies to improve student achievement.
- Allocating funding for school districts.
- Enforcing education law and regulations.
- Ensuring students with disabilities receive services and instruction.
- Establishing high school graduation requirements.
- Determining qualification for professional education personnel.
- Establishing state accountability and assessment programs.

- Establishing standards for school accreditation and preparation programs for teachers and administrators (CDE, 2020; A. Green, 2021; Micheli, 2019, NASBE, 2021).

However, implementation of educational practices is largely considered a local government function, either through COEs, townships or towns, or large district or regional district conglomerates (Louis, Thomas, Gordon, & Febey, 2008; Manna, 2013). As of 2010, 13 states operated under the COE model (Geverdt, 2018).

State Boards of Education

State BOEs exist in 48 of the 50 states and are groups of state citizens, from a low of nine to a high of 21, who develop and manage public education for the entire state (NASBE, 2021; Usdan, 2021). State Board members are either elected by the populace, appointed by the state's governor, appointed by the state legislature, or are a combination of appointees and elected officials. The length of service terms varies from 3-9 years, with the most common length being 4 years (Usdan, 2011).

Each state's laws give their BOEs diverse levels of authority, but all have three common powers:

- Power to adopt and revise educational policies.
- Serve as a bridge between the populace and legislature.
- Power to question educational policies on behalf of their constituents (NASBE, 2021).

Additionally, they may have oversight of the following areas:

- Setting of educational standards.
- Accreditation of educational programs.

- Certification of teachers and administrators.

- Influence over state education department budgets.

- Graduation requirements.

- State testing and assessment programs (Usdan, 2021).

Arguably, one of their most important roles may be the ability to appoint and supervise a chief state school officer. Only 21 State Boards have this power; however, those that do function similarly to their respective district level counterparts (Scudella, 2013). Regardless of the model, the state BOE is tasked with working collaboratively to ensure the academic and social success of their students (NASBE, 2021; Scudella, 2013; Usdan, 2021).

The Role of COEs in the United States

COEs were established around the turn of the 20th century as an intermediary between the state education department and local school districts to provide a form of legislative and fiscal oversight. Their role has expanded since the 1930s as counties have been tasked with the distribution of student- and school-allocated monies collected by each state (Hendrick & Ortiz, 1986; Pisapia, 2014). The advent of funding oversight and the lack of access to student services led to COEs becoming a service provider for districts that were unable to afford to support their students' learning (Pisapia, 2014; Trillingham, 1958).

In today's urban districts, dependence on the COEs can be limited. Most large districts in heavily populated areas were founded during the 1930s without prescribed legislative oversight and have established the capability to provide student services as needed via taxes and state funding (Pisapia, 2014). Rural districts, however, depend

strongly on state government and COEs to provide services for students that they cannot

afford due to lack of tax-based funding and large populations (Hendrick & Ortiz, 1986;

Pisapia, 2014).

National COE Superintendents

Leading the COEs in the U.S. is the county superintendent of schools. In most

cases, the superintendent is elected by the populace (ED100, 2019). County

superintendents are responsible for managing the direct services offered through the

COE, such as financial oversight, curricular implementation, and special education

(ED100, 2019; Geverdt, 2018). County superintendent positions were first established in

the early 1800s, and most of the 38 states and four territories had a county superintendent

of education at that time. By 1879, that number had fallen to 28, and as of 2010, there

were only 13 states with COE superintendents (Geverdt, 2018; Newsom, 1932).

Early duties for the county superintendent focused mainly on delivering clerical

reports to the state to ensure that each district was meeting legislative requirements

(Newsom, 1932). As the role grew in importance, the superintendent's duties increased

in rigor to include oversight of teacher development, district allocation of state and

federal funding, adoption of textbooks and curriculum, and the creation of specialized

schools, such as juvenile court and community schools and special education school sites

(Geverdt, 2018; Johnson, 1953; Newsom, 1932). The advent of the No Child Left

Behind Act of 2001 expanded the role of the county superintendent of schools to oversee

academic achievement and monitor district spending on pupils who were historically

disadvantaged (ED100, 2019; Harris, 2007). Finally, President Barack Obama instituted

the ESSA in 2015, which allowed states to have more control over spending to support

disadvantaged and high-need students (U.S. Department of Education, 2021c). This act increased the need for county superintendents to monitor and advise districts on how to allocate their funding through their LCAPs (Warren, 2016).

State of California, COEs

The California state legislature enacted laws to establish the CDE in 1852 but was not officially organized until 1921. The populace had begun electing COE superintendents in 1855 as an adjunct to the office of the county assessor (CCSESA, 2017; Johnson, 1953). California COEs were created to support the new county superintendents. At the time, there were approximately 200,000 students of school age, yet only one in four attended school (CDE, 1884). Today, there are approximately 6.227 million students in compulsory education, and 1,037 districts throughout California (CDE, 2022). The number of students served in each county ranges from 100 to over 1.7 million (ED100, 2019).

Number of California COEs

The state is divided into 58 counties, each of which houses a COE (CCSESA, 2017). COEs serve as a hub for the school districts housed under them. This allows for districts whose borders span multiple towns to be consolidated under one centralized entity to ensure equal access to funding and services that the COE provides (ED100, 2019; Harris, 1984). The majority of COEs (48) are located in what is considered middle and northern California. In the south, there are only 10 COEs, but they serve the two largest school districts, Los Angeles Unified and San Diego Unified (CDE, 2022).

Purpose and Function

According to Hendrick and Ortiz (1986), "All of the functions provided by the County Office have the origins in some form of legislative authorization" (p. 140). The services provided are either mandated or permissive in nature; meaning the services are either prescribed by the legislature or have been elected to be performed via service contract (H. M. Edwards, 2014; Hendrick & Ortiz, 1986; M. Taylor, 2017)

The evolution of COEs from monitoring and reporting to the state department of education to a more directive role of governance over their school districts has occurred due to state and federal legislative changes (Hendrick & Ortiz, 1986). The emergence of the LCFF in 2013 and ESSA of 2015 added a heightened level of fiscal oversight to the services already provided by COEs (Manansala, 2019; Warren, 2016). COE responsibilities fall into these general categories, and include the following:

- LCAP review, oversight and alignment.

- Differentiated assistance.

- Education of special populations (special education, court and community school, fostered, homeless and Career Technical Education).

- Credential monitoring.

- Professional development for teachers and administrators (CCSESA, 2017; Lewis et al., 2017; Manansala, 2019; Plank et al., 2019; Warren, 2016).

Local Control Funding Formula and Local Control and Accountability Plan. The LCFF legislation, enacted in 2013, fundamentally changed the way in which LEAs were funded and how their student outcomes were measured. Under the old funding model, monies were allotted based on students' average daily attendance, and targeted

programs based on the unique needs of students in each LEA (CDE, 2021a). Under the LCFF, each LEA is tasked with developing an LCAP that determines how funding is spent based on the goals and needs of each LEA (CDE, 2021a; Warren, 2016).

COEs are tasked with helping LEAs implement their LCAPs; providing technical assistance, educational and administrative services; and overseeing their implementation (M. Taylor, 2017). The purpose of this support is to drive continuous improvement and increase successful student outcomes (Manansala & Cottingham, 2019). LEAs that fail to meet their chosen goals, and/or that request additional assistance, may appeal to their COE to access more services under the differentiated assistance program (Manansala & Cottingham, 2019; Warren, 2016).

Differentiated Assistance. As a part of California's statewide system of support for local school districts, and based on the LCFF and each district's LCAP, COEs are required to support their needs through a program of differentiated assistance (Humphrey & O'Day, 2019). Assistance and services provided are determined based on identified areas for growth through the CDE School Dashboard. There are eight priority areas against which COEs' districts are measured: basic services and school conditions, implementation of state academic standards, parental involvement and family engagement, student achievement, student engagement, school climate, accessibility to a broad course of study, and outcomes in broad courses of study. The COEs are also judged on the coordination of services for expelled students and foster youth. Each section of the Dashboard is rated on a 5-point scale from lowest to highest levels of performance (CDE, 2019). Should any district or COE meet the criteria established by the state over time, they will be eligible for differentiated assistance (CDE, 2021b).

Differentiated assistance from the COE can come in many forms, but must be requested from the LEA. The COE can provide budgetary, academic, technological, and program alignment services all focused on improving student performance (CDE, 2021b; Warren, 2016). The goal of differentiated assistance is supporting LEAs' collaboration with their COE in goal setting and achievement and increasing the LEAs' capacity to serve students (Humphrey, 2019; Warren, 2016).

Education of Special Populations. Most COEs offer specialized educational programs and school sites for students with special needs, students who have been expelled or referred, students who are adjudicated in the court systems, and Career Technical Education programs (ED100, 2021; H. M. Edwards, 2014; M. Taylor, 2017). For students with special needs, the COE may provide services via a SELPA. SELPAs were created under the 1974 California Master Plan for Special Education, which required LEAs and COEs to join together in geographical regions to provide students with specialized learning and services that the LEAs may not have been able to provide due to staffing and financial constraints (California Charter Schools Association [CCSA], 2021; CDE, 2021a). These consortiums serve all students who need assistance within the regional boundaries either with adjunct services or specialized school settings run by the COEs (Anderson, 2018; CDE, 2021a).

Students who have been expelled by or referred from local districts or by a School Attendance Review Board, and those who are paroled or are on probation or are considered high-risk, may be able to attend community day schools through their COE (CCSESA, 2014; H. M. Edwards, 2014). Only COEs are authorized to create and maintain community day schools. Students who are incarcerated are served educationally

through COE schools operated through the juvenile justice system (CCSESA, 2014; CDE, 2021e).

Other student groups often served under the COEs include foster, homeless, Native American, and migrant youth. Although LEA LCAPs must address the needs of these students, it falls under COE oversight to ensure that they are provided with the services needed to ensure positive outcomes for these populations. Many of these programs are funded by state and federal funding sources, and the COEs can act as a pass-through to providing those funds to LEAs (CCSESA, 2014; ED100, 2021).

Finally, COEs also operate Regional Occupational Centers or programs that offer Career Technical Education or vocational education opportunities to youth and adults (CCSESA, 2014; ED100, 2021). COEs have the option to open educational sites, hire personnel, and govern these centers and programs. They have the funding and staff available to implement professional development and credentialing programs for LEAs in need of vocational teachers. Additionally, they have access to at-risk youth in other educational settings such as those in juvenile detention facilities and community schools who would benefit from access to these programs (Lewis et al., 2017).

Credential Monitoring. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing is the governing body that oversees educator credentialing. Each of the 58 COEs has a credentials department that is charged with monitoring and recommending educators for credentials (CCSESA, 2014). The monitoring of credentials for each LEA within a county office's purview is done on a yearly basis under the California Statewide Assignment Accountability System (CalSAAS). Any anomalies found in the assignments of educators versus their credential type(s) are addressed through the COE's

credentials departments and either rectified or reported to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021).

Professional Development. COEs are authorized by the state Education Code to provide professional development for teachers in the school districts they serve. The type and frequency of the training provided can be standardized for all districts but can also be tailored to fit each district's needs based on their LCAP (CCSESA, 2014; Humphrey, 2019; M. Taylor, 2017). In collaboration with the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, COEs are also able to offer teacher induction programs that allow newly credentialed teachers to utilize job-embedded experience to obtain a clear professional credential (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021; M. Taylor, 2017). This process allows teachers to recertify on a 5-year cycle (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021). COEs also offer professional development for aspiring and current administrators, as well as administrative induction programs, to improve administrators' supervision skills (E. Edwards & Stevens, 2014; Petersen et al., 2008).

California COE Superintendents

The offices of county superintendents of schools were established pursuant to Section 3, Article IX of the California Constitution; these leaders are considered officers of the county (E. Edwards & Stevens, 2014). The first California COE superintendents were elected biennially beginning in 1855 as mandated by the legislature (Henrikson, 2019; Johnson, 1953). In 1878, the Constitutional Convention updated the term to a 4-year position based on the argument led by then San Diego County Superintendent, Eli T. Blackmer. He stated that the previous 2-year term limit was not long enough to enact changes needed in the interest of students under his purview (Johnson, 1953). The length

of the term of each elected county superintendent continues to be 4 years to the present day.

By 1932, all 58 California counties had a county superintendent of schools (Butterworth, 1932). Over time, the process of election of five of the county superintendents (Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Clara) was abolished in favor of appointments by their respective BOEs (CCSESA, 2017). In these counties, the superintendent has essentially the same roles and responsibilities as their elected counterparts (E. Edwards & Stevens, 2014).

Roles and Responsibilities

Under the California Education Code Section 1240, county superintendents of schools must do the following:

- Manage all the schools in the county including community and court schools.

- Oversee each school district's fiscal solvency.

- Develop, approve, and administer district budgets.

- Visit every school in the county.

- Provide a written report to each district's BOE on the state of their schools/charters and offer targeted support based on ESSA.

- Distribute laws and regulations they receive to all districts.

- Provide a yearly report to the Superintendent of Public Instruction regarding the fiscal solvency of each district.

- Enforce the use of state adopted textbooks and instructional materials.

- Act as a purchasing agent for districts.

- Monitor and report attendance yearly for all districts.

- Report any certificated person accused of fiscal malfeasance.

- Assist in developing, monitoring, and providing assistance for district LCAPs.

- Provide superintendent management and services to their own COE (California Legislative Information, 2021; H. Edwards & Stevens, 2014; Plank et al., 2019; Trillingham, 1952).

County superintendents fulfill many other responsibilities and provide additional services to districts such as legal assistance, grant management, and offering emergency loans (H. Edwards & Stevens, 2014). However, the adjunct support and services provided are at the discretion of the superintendent and are based on their priorities, funding availability, and the COE's mission (H. Edwards & Stevens, 2014; M. Taylor, 2017).

California District Superintendents

Unlike the majority of county superintendents, California's 1,028 district superintendents are appointed by their BOEs. The district superintendents in the state number 1,025, including seven single district counties: Alpine, Del Norte, Mariposa, Plumas, San Francisco, and Sierra (CCSESA, 2017). Superintendents serve as the chief executive of their districts and are chosen by their BOEs to meet the district's individualized needs (EdSource, 2007; Education Writers Association [EWA], 2003). The nature of the superintendency has changed in the past century from an emphasis on being an instructional leader to one of visionary, fundraiser, and culturally sensitive problem solver (Björk et al., 2014; Dabney-Lieras, 2008; Harmeier, 2016; Moore, 2012; Trillingham, 1958).

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the district superintendent began in the mid-1800s as a quasi-clerical assistant to the BOE whose position was to carry out the policies of the BOE and coordinate the implementation of the district's daily operations (Björk et al., 2014). Over time, the business of running a school district became more difficult, with financial, political, and educational demands pulling at BOE members. By the mid-20th century, the office of superintendent had evolved into a closer representation of what we see today, in that the BOE and the superintendent work together to carry out a vision for the future of the district (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; ECRA Group, 2010; Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011).

Superintendents function as the CEOs of the district. They are the educational and instructional leaders, but also the heads of finance, transportation, policy implementation, maintenance, and operations, in addition to being communicators, supervisors, and policy enactors (ECRA Group, 2010; Kowalski, 2013; Weiss, Templeton, Thompson, & Tremont, 2014). Recent changes in district demographics and diversity are affecting the complexity of the position inasmuch as the superintendent must now be an effective communicator and negotiator who is sensitive to the needs of his/her demographics and BOE members (Houston, 2001; Rogers & Tienken, 2020; Weiss et al., 2014). All of these skills are mandatory, along with a vision for the future of the district, providing inspired leadership, and a solid focus on student social and academic achievement (Cuban, 2008; Harmeier, 2016; Melton et al., 2019).

District Boards of Education

The BOE is an elected governing body (comprising typically five to nine members) that oversees the schools located in their California districts (Björk et al., 2014; CSBA, 2021). BOEs were first established in the early 1800s as local committees that wanted an education for their area's children. As their municipalities began to grow, they banded into districts or county systems to utilize their tax base to provide more regular and advanced educational opportunities (EWA, 2003). There are now more than 5,000 BOE members in the state of California elected by their districts' populations, working in conjunction with superintendents to serve all of the students in their communities (CSBA, 2021).

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the BOE is a visionary one, establishing structure and policies, providing support to the superintendent and stakeholders, ensuring accountability, providing fiscal oversight, and advocating for students' rights (CSBA, 2021; EWA, 2003). They must balance the needs of the school district with the needs and wants of their constituents, otherwise they may be voted out of office during the next election cycle (Henrikson, 2019). Arguably, the BOE's most important role is that of the superintendent's employer; therefore, it is vital that the BOE and superintendent work together to build a trusting relationship and avoid conflict that would deter them from the goal of promoting student achievement (DiCanio et al., 2016; Henri   kson, 2019; Melton et al., 2019).

Theoretical Framework: Factors That Affect District Superintendent Effectiveness and Job Performance

According to the ECRA Group (2010), "The true definition of the superintendency must reflect a comprehensive and challenging vision of district leadership, a synthesis of managerial and leadership components, interpersonal skills, and strategic action assessment" (p. 3). This concept is further supported by Henry and Reidy (2005), Dabney-Lieras (2009), and Kowalski et al. (2011), who found that the growing skill sets needed by a superintendent to be successful are matched by the ever-changing political landscape of their district. Many factors such as BOE relationships, communication skills, fiscal knowledge, and a successful mentor/coach partnership can affect a superintendent's success (Freeley & Seinfeld, 2012; Harmeier, 2016; Kriesky, 2018; Kowalski et al., 2011; Marzano & Waters, 2005; Myers, 2011).

Superintendent Turnover

Since the mid-20th century, there has been an academic research focus on superintendent turnover rates and their effect on school districts, educational policies, student achievement, and community relations (Mouton, 2013; Myers, 2011; Parker, 1996; Sparks, 2012; Weller, Brown & Flynn, 1991; Wimpelberg, 1997). The American Association of School Administrators conducted a 2006 study of 1,338 school superintendents and found that the average tenure of their leadership was 5.5-6 years (Glass & Franchescini, 2007). However, in 2016, EdSource conducted a survey of California's 30 largest districts; in 17, the superintendent had been in office 3 years or less, and in nine their tenure was less than 1 year (Freedberg & Collier, 2016). Although there is ample evidence that superintendents are frequently required to make unpopular

and/or politically volatile choices, there are identifiable reasons why superintendents may not be successful in their roles as district leaders (Cuban, 2008; Frey, 2012; Grier, 2015; Tekniepe, 2015; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Inadequate Preparation

The path to superintendency usually includes being a teacher, an administrator, and then a superintendent. There are university preparation programs for each step of the journey, and a two-tiered system for state credentialing (EdSource, 2007). However, traditional administrator preparation programs may not be fulfilling the needs of the 21st century superintendent (Hall, 2006; Mercer & Myers, 2013; Orr, 2007; Tripses, Hunt, & Watkins, 2013). Administrator preparation programs often focus on the duties of the principalship, and not the overarching work of a superintendent (Petersen et al., 2008). This *sit-and-get* model of professional learning, rather than an internship or induction model, is not allowing for aspiring superintendents to receive the type of training or the ability to develop skills necessary in a challenging school district environment (Hall, 2006; Mercer & Myers, 2013; Tripses et al., 2013).

There is also a critical need for the preparation and training of elected superintendents. In a study conducted by Petersen et al. (2008), 17% of novice superintendents who responded had no formal state-approved training prior to taking office. Additionally, as of 2008, nine states no longer required a teaching or administrative license to become a district administrator. Business, political, and economic professionals are now entering the ranks of superintendent. Lack of professional preparation and knowledge base of student learning combined with the politics of school administration have led to political tensions and arguments regarding

the best candidates to govern a school district, taking away the focus from student success (Kowalski, 2004).

Professional Development

Inadequate preparation may be mitigated by high levels of targeted professional development for superintendents. However, researchers have noted that there is a lack of superintendent skills-based training (Cicchelli, Marcus, & Weiner, 2002; EdSource, 2007, Hawk & Martin, 2011). Much of the existing research based on administrator professional development is focused on principals' skills, leadership, and management, with very little programming being offered for superintendents (Nino, Boone, Aguilar, & Edwards, 2014). To face the challenging demands of the superintendency, leaders need to have access to high quality leadership training, as well as to keep abreast of current laws, regulations, and teaching trends (Spanneut, Tobin, & Ayres, 2011). Another key to superintendent success is the ability to self-identify their own professional development needs based on their own level of learning, as well as conformity to the vision and policies of the BOE (Nino et al., 2014, Spanneut et al., 2011). COEs and professional associations offer training opportunities for district administrators, but accessibility and cost can be prohibiting factors (Plank et al., 2018).

Being the Right Fit

In addition to inadequate preparation and professional development, the success of a superintendent can depend on the quality of match between their skill set and the needs of the school district and the BOE (EWA, 2003). Cuban (2008) asserted that "it's best not to look for a superstar," but instead to "find the right person for the right time and place" (p. 27). Although matches between the superintendent candidate and the BOE

may look good on paper, many unseen factors play a role in the success of the relationship (Freeley & Seinfeld, 2012). Politics, community bias, bad-mouthing, and lack of shared leadership can all backfire on a superintendent (Grier, 2015). When the superintendent is not a good fit, BOEs must make the difficult decision to cut ties and hope to find a better match for the needs of the educational community, or to stay with the incumbent and work toward developing a better working relationship (Grissom & Andersen, 2012).

Communication Skills and Building Relationships

Lack of strong communication skills and the inability to build working relationships with stakeholders can also shorten the tenure of a school superintendent (Freely & Seinfeld, 2012). In a study by Henry and Reidy (2005), the authors concluded that good communication was integral to the success of the relationship between the superintendent and the BOE. The researchers also noted that good communication heightened student success. Frequency, brevity, and strategic communication as well as strong interpersonal communication skills such as empathetic listening all are necessary in order for superintendents and BOE members to gain mutual support and approval as well as to build social capital with their community (Petersen & Short, 2002; Ripley et al., 2013). Without open communication, superintendents face the revolving door of turnover (Frey, 2012).

Relationship building is also an essential skill for superintendents (Sparks, 2012; Tekniepe, 2015). In a politically charged landscape, relationships that superintendents build with BOE, district stakeholders, and the community tend to sustain their tenure through difficult times (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). The bank of goodwill needs

regular deposits to ensure that when times are tough, the superintendent can work together with others to solve district issues, instead of both parties turning against each other (Williams & Hatch, 2012).

Fiscal Expertise

School superintendents find out quickly that the budget sits at the center of every discussion that is had and decision that is made in the district (Abshier, Harris & Hopson, 2011; Bird, Wang & Murray, 2009). Abshier et al. (2011) stated, "Effective money management is vital to the success and survival of a school superintendent" (p. 2). Budget cuts in the early 2000s put extreme pressure on superintendents to increase student achievement with less money and resources (Ginsberg & Multon, 2011). With dwindling morale, and the demand for innovation and technology advancement, superintendents are now trying to find ways to do more with less (Ginsberg & Multon, 2011; Platter, 2010).

Budget management ability has been a mainstay on the wish list of BOE members when selecting a superintendent (ECRA Group, 2010). However, many superintendents come into the profession without any formalized budget management training and very little professional development available (Bird et al., 2009). In urban areas with a high student population, district leadership includes a business officer; however, in rural areas, the superintendent must also provide fiscal leadership because the district cannot afford both positions (Abshier et al., 2011). With stretched budgets, superintendents are leaving the field due to lack of resources and an inability to meet their stakeholders' demands (Colorado Association of School Executives [CASE], 2004; Ginsberg & Multon, 2011).

Executive Coaching

Since the early 21st century, there has been a movement among school leadership to provide executive coaching to their superintendents (Pardini, 2003). Executive coaches offer an outsider's view on district and community issues and serve as thought partners for superintendents to solve problems and tackle district challenges (Portscheller, 2021). In 2010, AASA released its Decennial Study, which indicated that only 20% of superintendent respondents across the United States were receiving coaching or mentoring. Although corporate America has embraced the need for executive coaching, which has shown a large return on investment, BOEs are still reluctant to mandate coaching for their superintendents (Pardini, 2003). On the job coaching has shown to be a valuable resource for supporting the tenure of district superintendents (Harmeier, 2016; Zachry, 2010) and, as the need for strong partnership with their BOE grows, mentors and coaching offer the opportunity for superintendents to grow in their collaborative practice (Houston, 2001).

Board Relations

As with their county counterparts, district superintendents work closely with their BOEs to create a vision for the district, implement policy, manage the day-to-day operations of the district, and provide opportunities for students to succeed academically and socially (EWA, 2003; Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Jutabha, 2017). When the superintendent arrives at his/her district for the first time, his/her relationship with the Board has been forged largely through the interview process. The real work of creating a strong relationship with the body that hired them comes later through the formation of coalitions with Board members and establishing trust-based decision-making (Fusarelli,

2006). BOE members are elected to their positions and, over time, they either leave or are forced out via elections. Therefore, superintendents who stay long enough in one district find that changes to the make-up of the BOE will have lasting effects on their ability to lead, necessitating the redevelopment of relationships and Board culture (Grier, 2015). The ability to build mutual respect, stay flexible and collaborative, and prioritize student achievement are essential elements in superintendent/board relations (Capullo, 2021).

Job Stress

With the increased number of challenges faced by school superintendents, stress in the workplace has become a leading cause of superintendent turnover (Hawk & Martin, 2011). Lack of financial resources, the need for compliance with state and federal mandates, long days, and strained board relations are just a few of the daily stressors that superintendents must manage (Hawk & Martin, 2011; Lou, 2005; Robinson & Shakeshaft, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic has done little to relieve stress on the system or district superintendents as they navigate the difficult and constantly changing federal, state, and county mandates, as well as angry parent groups and dissenting school boards (K. Taylor & Nierenberg, 2021). The effect of COVID-19 stress on superintendent turnover has been notable and does not appear to diminish any time in the near future (Sawchuk, 2021).

Theoretical Foundation

The general theoretical foundation for this study was superintendent leadership and longevity. Many studies have been conducted on the topic of leadership and influences on occupational longevity. Authors such as Bernard Bass and Jean Hartley and John Benington have contributed to the field with research and insight into the topic

of leadership. Bass (1985) started by examining the identifying the difference between a transactional leader and a leader who is considered transformational. Bass distinguished transactional leadership and transformational leadership by contrasting a leader who places value on task completion (i.e., transactional) with a leader who focuses on relationship building (i.e., transformational). Overall, Bass was able to support the increase in motivation and productivity of workers who have a transformational leader as higher and more sustainable than those who are led by a transactional leader. Building on the characteristics displayed by a transformational leader, Hartley and Benington (2010) identified key characteristics of a leader, such as emotional intelligence (EI), and political awareness.

Authors such as Pardini (2003), Portscheller (2021), and Harmeier (2016) discussed the impacts of executive coaching on longevity in leadership positions, particularly the position of superintendent. They argued that executive coaching, if done appropriately, enhances the possible longevity of superintendents. Other authors such as Hawk and Martin (2011), Robinson and Shakeshaft (2015), and K. Taylor and Nierenberg (2021) have identified the impact of stressors from areas such as board relations, personnel issues, fiscal management, and community relations as having a direct impact on superintendent longevity. These authors recommended that stress management processes and techniques be a part of a superintendent's professional development activity. A number of researchers have studied the environmental factors that affect the longevity of leaders, particularly superintendents.

Goodwin, Whittington, Murray, and Nichols (2011) identified two types of trust evident in leader subordinate relationship: affective- and cognitive-based trust. Cognitive-

based trust stems from the experience of the leader exhibiting trustworthiness and affective-based trust is formed from the emotional bonds between leader and subordinate. Goodwin et al. stated that not only are transformational leaders trusted by their subordinates, but also the subordinates are seen to show elevated levels of positivity regarding job duties as well as improved work performance. In alignment with relationships and trust determining success for a leader, the authors asserted that EI is a necessity of leadership throughout their research.

Sayeed and Shanker (2009) discussed the relevance of a leader's EI, and whether EI had an impact on others within a particular organization. Sayeed and Shanker described EI as a prominent quality in workers who can deliver results and lead individuals through transformational change. When leaders are better able to recognize the emotional state of those they lead, they are better equipped to adjust their communication to create the necessary level of motivation within the group. Higher levels of EI and the ability to create relationships lead to greater levels of trust between subordinate and leader. Throughout the published leadership research, the common thread of relationship, trust, and EI is present when referencing effective and transformational leadership styles.

Theoretical Framework

In most qualitative and quantitative research, variables for a study are selected using theoretical frameworks identified in the literature. For example, a study of transformational leadership might use the 10 domains of Larick and White's (2012) Transformational Leadership Skills Inventory (TLSi) as variables for posing questions for the study. The variables in the TLSi have been researched and confirmed to be valid

through their development for the instrument. Validity is very important to the

instrument, as well as to research in general, because it can determine the quality of a

given study and its applicability to future research (Golafshani, 2003).

For this study, the general theoretical topic was leadership and longevity for

superintendents. However, Delphi studies do not use variables identified from the

literature, but rather use the collective knowledge and wisdom of experts to identify the

variables that emerge through the three-round process. There is no literature-based

theoretical framework identified from literature chosen and used in Delphi studies.

Rather, qualified experts are selected and used on an expert panel to assure the validity of

the variables and collected data (Golafshani, 2003). The input from the experts creates a

unique theoretical framework for each Delphi process because of the experts' knowledge

of and competence with respect to the research topic (Habibi, Sarafrazi, & Izadyar, 2014;

Mohamad, Embi, & Nordin, 2015). The consensus of the experts and the controlled

feedback further provides validity to the study (Golafshani, 2003; Habibi et al., 2014).

Research Gap

The issue of superintendent turnover across the United States is one of concern

for all district stakeholders (Cuban, 2008; Freedberg & Collier, 2016; Sparks, 2012). The

knowledge and skill sets needed to run a district vary widely. District finances, elections,

politics, community discord, federal and state mandates, the pandemic, and student

achievement are just a few of the issues superintendents are juggling today (Antonucci,

2012; Bird et al., 2009; Dabney-Lieras, 2009; Freeley & Seinfeld, 2012; Glass, Björk, &

Brunner, 2000). There is evidence that there may be opportunities for support that have

not been examined or implemented previously (ECRA Group, 2010; Harmeier, 2016;

Kowalski, 2011). Although many issues may lead superintendents to leave the position

and profession, their local COEs could provide much-needed training and services that

would increase district superintendent tenure (ED100, 2019; Lewis et al., 2017;

Manansala, 2017). However, despite the substantial amount of literature detailing their

failings and why they occur, there is scant literature on the ways in which district

superintendents want to be supported by COEs and the methods for how that support

should be provided.

Summary

Historically, the role of local governments in education is dependent on the state

in which they operate (Geverdt, 2018, Manna, 2013; Roe & Herrington, 2021). Overall,

states have a governmental organization such as the Department of Education that

oversees county and district operations; however, some are monitored via their COEs, or

by district consortiums (Geverdt, 2018; Hendrick & Ortiz, 1986; U.S. Department of

Education, 2021b).

Each state education agency has a state superintendent or chief state school officer

(Finn et al., 2013). The head officer is either elected by the populace or appointed by the

governor or State BOE (Manna, 2013). In conjunction with the elected State BOEs, they

are tasked with establishing and monitoring policies, programs, and educational standards

(CDE, 2020; A. Green, 2021; Micheli, 2019, NASBE, 2021). Implementation, however,

is a local government function, done either through COE, or regional government or

school districts (Geverdt, 2018; Manna, 2013; Louis et al., 2008).

The role of COEs in regional education was first established in the early 20th

century as an intermediary between the state educational agencies and local school

districts (Hendrick & Ortiz, 1986; Pisapia, 2014). Their primary role was one of financial overseer and pass-through for federal and state funding (Hendrick & Ortiz, 1986; Pisapia, 2014). Over time, COEs became a monitoring body for federal and state policies and programs, and then a service provider for districts that could not afford to serve students' educational needs (Pisapia, 2014; Trillingham, 1958).

At the helm of COEs are superintendents. In the early 1800s these positions were established as clerical support for BOEs and were responsible for reporting district compliance with legislation to the state educational agency (Newsom, 1932). The role of COE superintendent grew in importance as legislative activity grew and BOE oversight of district daily functions lessened (ED100, 2019; Harris, 2007; Johnson, 1953; Newsom, 1932; Geverdt, 2018; Warren, 2016).

In the state of California, all 58 counties have COEs with superintendents (CCSESA, 2017). Their purpose and functions are similar to those in other states in that they monitor their districts to ensure legislative compliance (Hendrick & Ortiz, 1986). With the emergence of the LCCF, California COEs have expanded their fiscal oversight roles to include technical support and educational and administrative services through the differentiated assistance model (CDE, 2021b; Humphrey, 2019; M. Taylor, 2017; Warren, 2016).

COEs also offer additional services such as specialized schools and services for students with special needs, students who have been expelled, or students who are adjudicated (ED100, 2021; H. M. Edwards, 2014; M. Taylor, 2017). SELPAs provide special education services for their districts under the helm of the COE (CCSA, 2021; CDE, 2021a). COEs also provide educational services for students who are incarcerated,

foster youth, homeless youth, migrant youth, and Native American youth (CCSESA, 2014; CDE, 2021e; H. M. Edwards, 2014). The COEs act as a pass-through for state and federal funding and monitor and measure the educational success of student who are served by these programs (CDE, 2021c; Lewis et al., 2017).

Finally, COEs work collaboratively with the state's Commission on Teacher Credentialing in credential monitoring and teacher and administrator professional development. Through the CalSAAS monitoring system, certificated assignments are reported by district offices and confirmed as appropriate by COE staff (CCSESA, 2014; Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2021). Part of this process includes the confirmation of credentials held by teachers and administrators who have completed the credentialing process through programs of professional development often offered by COEs (CCSESA, 2014; Humphrey, 2019; M. Taylor, 2017).

As of 2017, California employed 1,028 district superintendents (CCSESA, 2017). They are considered the chief operating officers of their organizations and are responsible for the management of all district functions (Cuban, 2008; ECRA Group, 2010; Harmeier, 2016; Kowalski, 2013; Melton et al., 2019 Weiss et al., 2014). They work in conjunction with their BOEs. BOEs are elected by the populace and are the hiring authority that chooses the superintendent (Björk et al., 2014; CSBA, 2021). Their ability or inability to work together with BOEs is a determining factor in the superintendent's success the length of his/her tenure (Dabney-Lieras, 2009; ECRA Group, 2010; Henry & Reidy, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2011).

District superintendent turnover is a problem in the state of California, with 17 of 30 superintendents in the largest districts in the office for 3 years or less and nine for less

than 1 year (Freedberg & Collier, 2016). This is a marked difference from the national

average tenure of 5.5-6 years (Glass & Franchescini, 2007). As the chief officer of the

district, superintendents are often called upon to make unpopular decisions that turn their

BOEs and district stakeholders against them (Cuban, 2008; Frey, 2012; Grier, 2015;

Tekniepe, 2015; Waters & Marzano, 2006). They are also prone to being underprepared

for the demands of the job (Hall, 2006; Mercer & Myers, 2013; Orr, 2007; Tripses et al.,

2013). A lack of quality and targeted professional development (Cicchelli et al., 2002;

EdSource, 2007, Hawk & Martin, 2011), being in the wrong position at the wrong time

(Cuban, 2008), a lack of communication and relationship building skills (Freely &

Seinfeld, 2012; Sparks, 2012; Tekniepe, 2015), a lack of fiscal and budgetary expertise

(Abshier et al., 2011; Bird et al., 2009), a dearth of mentoring and coaching opportunities

(Harmeier, 2016; Zachry, 2010), poor BOE relations (EWA, 2003; Grissom & Andersen,

2012; Jutabha, 2017), and job stress (Hawk & Martin, 2011; Lou, 2005; Robinson &

Shakeshaft, 2015) all factor into frequent superintendent turnover.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This research study examined the services that the COE provided to their district superintendents and their relevance and value as perceived by COE superintendents and district superintendents. Because the services provided by COEs vary from county to county, so do the needs of each district's superintendent. Whereas one district may need targeted fiscal assistance, another may need training in building relationships with their BOE. This study examined the data collected regarding the services provided, their methods of delivery, and services district superintendents felt they needed to be successful in their position. The framework for this study first articulates the purpose statement. Then, the research questions and research design are examined. Each round of questions included one question for the superintendent/designee and another for the district superintendent. Questions were presented to the respondents in separate surveys. Next, the instrumentation, data collection, and analysis are explained. In particular, a comparison of the two Delphi studies is made. Finally, the limitations of the study are reviewed, and a summary is provided regarding the conclusions drawn from the comparative data.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed methods parallel comparative Delphi study was to identify the services provided by the COE to district superintendents that ensured their successful job performance from the perspective of both county superintendents/designees and district superintendents. The second purpose was to rate the importance of the identified services from both perspectives. The third purpose was to

identify the best methods of providing those services from both perspectives. The final purpose was to compare the results from county superintendents/designees to the results from the district superintendents to determine alignment and efficacy.

Research Questions

County Superintendent/Designee

- Round 1: What services do county superintendent/designees identify as important for COEs to provide for District Superintendents in their county to ensure their successful job performance?

- Round 2: How do county superintendent/designees rate the importance of the services identified from Research Question 1?

- Round 3: How do county superintendents/designees describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

- Qualitative Round 4: How do county superintendents/designees describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

District Superintendent

- Round 1: What services do district superintendents identify as important for COEs to provide for District Superintendents in their county to ensure their successful job performance?

- Round 2: How do district superintendents rate the importance of the services identified from Research Question 1?

- Round 3: How do district superintendents describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

- Qualitative Round 4: How do district superintendents describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

- Round 5: Comparison of responses. How do the results from district superintendent responses compare to the responses from county superintendents/designees?

Research Design

The selected methodology for the research questions presented previously was a mixed-methods, dual comparative, parallel Delphi study. According to Skulmoski et al. (2007), a Delphi study is a process by which research data is collected through a series of questioning rounds. This method, developed by Dalkey and Rourke (1971) from the Rand Corporation, allows experts in the field of study to provide information that may not be readily accessible or clear to others (Skulmoski et al., 2007). Experts are questioned to gather information to inform policy, form guidelines or standards, and predict future trends (R. A. Green, 2014; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). This process allows the data provided by experts to promote the understanding of problems and forecast possible solutions (Nworie, 2011).

The data for this study was collected in separate Delphi questionnaires from both county superintendents or their designees and district superintendents. The questions were directly related to the purpose of this study, which was to determine the effect of services and service delivery methods on district superintendents' success. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected from the respondents through four questioning rounds. The fifth round entailed the researcher's comparison of the gathered data. By

conducting multiple rounds of inquiry, an in-depth comparative analysis of each population's perceptions provided evidence to suggest potential future changes in services and service methods.

Additionally, the Delphi process allows participants to be forthright in their responses, because there is no opportunity for the experts to be biased or swayed by the opinions of others (R. A. Green, 2014). Through the use of controlled feedback, the Delphi "process is designed to reduce the effect of noise" (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 2). The lack of pressure to bend to the group will or toward an expert who is perceived as more knowledgeable creates space for individualized opinions based on each expert's experiences (Dalkey & Rourke, 1971). Therefore, the researcher can form conclusions from bias-free data, based on each expert's deep understanding of the subject area.

Population

A population is a group that conforms to specific criteria or characteristics to which research results can be generalized (Creswell, 2015; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The population in this study was chosen based on the described populations in the research questions. Throughout the United States, hierarchical educational systems are constructed under the United States Department of Education to meet the needs of each individual state (U.S. Department of Education, 2021a). Not all states have COEs in their reporting structure. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2005), as of 2005 only 34 of 50 states had structures similar to COEs, which they titled Regional Education Services Agencies. Of those 34 states, they housed approximately 10,902 public school districts. Due to the large number, it was necessary to choose a state population that had this educational structure.

Sampling Frame

Creswell (2018) defined the target population as a small percentage of the total population, narrowed to specifically define participants who display clear characteristics of significance and concern to the study. McMillian and Schumaker (2010) used the term sampling frame to describe a smaller subset of the general population for a study.

McMillian and Schumacher (2010) noted the critical importance researchers hold in "carefully defining both the target population and the sampling frame" (p. 129). The sampling frame represents the total group of individuals from which the study sample could be drawn. Due to the large number of COEs and school districts, the sampling frame for this study was narrowed to California county superintendents/designees and district superintendents. Although there is no optimal panel size for a Delphi study (Skulmoski et al., 2007), the population for this research was controlled by the number of county superintendents found in California (58), and the total number of districts/district superintendents (1,025) in those counties (CCSESA, 2017). Selecting the target population is vital to the efficacy of the study results because the data they provide can be generalized to apply to the entire sample (Creswell, 2012).

Sample

The sample is a group of participants in a study selected from the population from which the researcher intends to generalize. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), sampling is selecting a "group of individuals from whom data are collected" (p. 129). Similarly, Patten and Newhart (2015) defined a sample as a subset of the target population representing the whole population. The Delphi technique entails rounds of questioning that are intended to form consensus from a group of anonymous experts (Hsu

& Sandford, 2007). For the purposes of this research, experts were identified using the researcher's personal network, as well as a network of professional associates through CSESSA. Purposive and convenience sampling strategies were utilized to find and secure participants

To be considered an expert for this study, participants had to meet the following criteria:

1. A currently serving district superintendent or county superintendent/designee.
2. Three or more years serving in their current position.
3. A willingness to participate.

Delphi Sample Size

A critical component of Delphi research is in choosing expert participants, because the output of the Delphi is based on their opinions (Nworie, 2011). There are four requirements for expertise: (a) knowledge and experience with the issues under investigation, (b) capacity and willingness to participate, (c) sufficient time to participate in the Delphi, and (d) effective communication skills (Adler & Ziglio, 1996). Because expert opinion is sought, a purposive sample is necessary. Participants are selected not to represent the general population, but rather because of their expert ability to answer the research questions. Delphi panels may have as few as five and as many as 50 members, depending on the circumstances (Skulmoski et al., 2007). The sample size chosen for this study was 15 county superintendents/designees and 15 district superintendents.

Purposeful and Convenience Sampling

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that purposeful sampling provides researchers a selection of "particular elements from the population that will be

representative or informative about the topic of interest" (p. 138). This is a non-random process in which the researcher seeks individuals who are willing to participate in the study by providing their expertise (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

In addition, the convenience sampling strategy allows a qualitative researcher to establish an accessible sample based on the limitations of location and time (Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Patten & Newhart, 2015). In this study, the convenience sampling strategy was applied simultaneously with the purposeful sampling strategy to identify participants who met the criteria and were accessible to the researcher (Patten & Newhart 2015).

Sample Selection Process

The following process was used to identify and select the sample for this study:

1. All county superintendents/designees and district superintendents in California were contacted with a description of the study and a request to participate in the study.

2. From those who volunteered to participate and met the expert criteria, 15 county and district superintendents were chosen for the Delphi panels.

3. Chosen panel members were sent a more detailed description of the study (Appendix A), Informed Consent materials (Appendix B), Participant's Bill of Rights (Appendix C) and a description of the process (Appendix D).

4. Once participation of all members from both panels was confirmed and IRB approval was secured, surveys were sent out as described and data collection began.

Instrumentation

For the purposes of this study, the online survey tool Google Forms was utilized as the method for collecting survey data from study participants. Additionally, email was used to disseminate the survey, for communication, and to inform the experts at each phase of the questioning. Four rounds of surveys (Appendices E-H) were sent to each category of panelists. Because this was a comparative study, county superintendents or designee responses were separated from district superintendents. Neither group viewed the other group's responses until the study was complete. Round 1 elicited information regarding services provided by the COEs. Round 2 asked the respondents to rate the importance of those services. In Round 3, the respondents were asked to identify the best methods of delivering those services. Next, Round 4 asked the experts for qualitative responses on their rationale for the chosen methods of service delivery. Finally, the researcher analyzed the data from each respondent group and compared their answers.

County Superintendents/Designees

Round 1

The first-round survey question was open-ended: *What services do county superintendent/designees identify as important for COEs to provide for district superintendents in their county to ensure their successful job performance?* The experts' responses were coded and utilized for the creation of a list used in Round 2.

Round 2

The survey instrument in Round 2 was a forced ranking where county superintendent/designee participants weighted the compiled list collected in Round 1 from most to least important. The question was: *How do county*

superintendent/designees rate the importance of the services identified from Research

Question 1?

Round 3

Round 3 employed another open-ended question: *How do county*

superintendents/designees describe the best methods for providing the top five rated

services from Research Question 2? To respond, the county superintendents/designees

provided answers that aligned with each of the top five identified services.

Qualitative Round 4

The qualitative nature of Round 4 was exemplified in the question: *How do*

county superintendents/designees describe their rationale for selecting the methods for

providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

District Superintendents

Round 1

The first-round survey question was open-ended: *What services do district*

superintendents identify as important for COEs to provide for district superintendents in

their county to ensure their successful job performance? The experts' responses were

coded and utilized for the creation of a list used in Round 2.

Round 2

The survey instrument in Round 2 was a forced ranking where district

superintendent participants weighted the compiled list collected in Round 1 from most to

least important. The question was: *How do district superintendents rate the importance of*

the services identified from Research Question 1?

Round 3

Round 3 employed another open-ended question: *How do district superintendents describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?* To respond, the district superintendents provided answers that aligned with each of the top five identified services.

Qualitative Round 4

The qualitative nature of Round 4 was exemplified in the question: *How do district superintendents describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?*

Round 5

In this round, the researcher compared all data collected from county superintendent/designee and district superintendent respondents. The data were placed into frequency tables for the purposes of comparison. The comparison was conducted in multiple configurations to offer differing perspectives on the data collected.

Validity

According to Salkind (2017), "Validity is, most simply, the property of an assessment tool that indicates that the tool does what it says it does" (p. 168). This research attempted to quantify and qualify the benefits of services and service methods provided by county superintendents/designees on district superintendents' job success. The validity of this research was ensured by the participation of the expert respondents in a controlled survey setting (Golafshani, 2003; McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). In addition, a field test was conducted to verify that the study's measuring tools would provide the needed information.

Reliability

Patten and Newhart (2015) described reliability in a study as necessary in order to judge its quality and applicability in similar situations. Similarly, Golafshani (2003) asserted that the ability to replicate or repeat a study and obtain similar data ensures the methodology and processes are sound and reliable. The experts participating in this study were asked to provide replicable data through using valid instruments through a documented data collection process (Petty, Briñol, Loersch, & McCaslin, 2009). Additionally, a field test was conducted to further ensure the validity and reliability of the surveys.

Field Test

A field test was conducted to confirm the validity and reliability of the survey instruments. In research studies, field tests are often utilized before the commencement of the study to gather information about the variability and credibility of the survey instruments (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Conducting a pilot study allowed the researcher to make any necessary adjustments prior to distributing the formal survey.

The field test respondents included two county superintendents and two district superintendents that did not participate in the actual study. Rounds 1-4 of the questioning followed the same guidelines as the formal survey, but also included four additional questions to be answered after each round:

1. Are the instructions for this survey question clear? Please provide a rationale for your answer.

2. Is the language in this question clear, and does it provide enough information for you to understand how to respond? Please provide a rationale for your answer.

3. Do you have any suggestions for revising this survey question? How would you revise it and why?

After the first four rounds were answered, the researcher analyzed the feedback for each question and revised the questions for each round as needed to ensure the validity and reliability of the study.

Data Collection

Once permission was granted by the University of Massachusetts Global Institutional Review Board, the researcher began the iterative process of collecting data through the Delphi technique. The Delphi technique, where researchers utilize rounds of questioning, provides consensus and identifies areas where opinions diverge, thereby providing previously unknown information or revealing new areas for research (Nworie, 2011). The following rounds of questioning were implemented for both county superintendents/designees and district superintendents in separate surveys. The processes were identical, and the data aggregated separately.

County Superintendent/ Designee

Round 1

The Google Form survey was emailed to the experts. The respondents had 1 week to complete Round 1. All responses to the survey were collected anonymously and stored in the Google platform. This process ensured that the data would be available to the researcher throughout the study. Reponses were only accessible by the researcher and

were not shared with any other party. The Round 1 question to county superintendents/designees was: *What services do county superintendents/designees identify as important for COEs to provide for district superintendents in their county to ensure their successful job performance?*

Round 2

For Round 2, the responses gathered from county superintendents/designees were coded thematically and totaled. Utilizing Google Forms, the question for Round 2 asked the participants to rate the importance of each of those services. A Likert scale with a continuum of *very important* to *not important at all* was utilized, and the top five services were identified. The panelists had 1 week to answer the question for Round 2: *How do county superintendent/designees rate the importance of the services identified from Research Question 1?*

Round 3

In Round 3, the top five responses from Round 2 were utilized to address the following question: *How do county superintendents/designees describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?* Data collected from this question was coded thematically and provided as a resource for the question in Round 4. Participants were given 1 week to answer the question from Round 3.

Qualitative Round 4

The qualitative question ended the Delphi iterations: *How do county superintendents/designees describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?* Responses from this

question were coded thematically and, as with all the survey data, the anonymous answers were stored in Google Forms.

District Superintendents

Round 1

The Google Form survey was emailed to the experts. The respondents had 1 week to complete Round 1. All responses to the survey were collected anonymously and stored in the Google platform. This protocol ensured that the data would be available to the researcher throughout the study. Reponses were only accessible by the researcher and were not shared with any other party. The Round 1 question to district superintendents was: *What services do district superintendents identify as important for COEs to provide for district superintendents in their county to ensure their successful job performance?*

Round 2

For Round 2, the responses gathered from district superintendents were coded thematically and totaled. Utilizing Google Forms, the question for Round 2 asked the participants to rate the importance of each of those services. A Likert scale with a continuum of *very important* to *not important at all* was utilized, and the top five services were identified. The panelists had 1 week to answer question 2: *How do district superintendents rate the importance of the services identified from Research Question 1?*

Round 3

In Round 3, the top five responses from Round 2 were utilized to address the following question: *How do district superintendents describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?* Data collected from this

question was coded thematically and provided as a resource for the question in Round 4. Participants were given 1 week to answer the question from Round 3.

Qualitative Round 4

The qualitative question ended the Delphi iterations: *How do district superintendents describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?* The experts were given 1 week to respond to Round 4. Responses from this question were coded thematically and, as with all the survey data, the anonymous answers were stored in Google Forms.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the survey data began upon completion of the first round for both the county superintendents/designees and the district superintendents. Data was collected in both quantitative (Rounds 1-3) and qualitative (Round 4) formats. Patten and Newhart (2015) defined the mixed methods approach as having "at least one qualitative and one quantitative component of original research in the study design" (p. 177). This research was designed to integrate both types of data to further the understanding, relevance, and reliability of the information collected.

Quantitative

Quantitative data was collected in Rounds 1-3, and the expert responses (either county superintendents/designees or district superintendents) in each round were utilized to inform the next round. In these rounds, the data was analyzed utilizing a descriptive statistical analysis. According to Patten and Newhart (2015), descriptive statistics attempt only to describe the data collected.

The responses to Round 1 were coded thematically and provided to the experts to help them answer the question for Round 2. In Round 2 the participants were asked to rank the importance of services provided by COEs. A Likert scale was utilized to provide the researcher with the top five highest rated services.

These top five services were examined further by the experts in Round 4 when they identified the best delivery methods for these services. The descriptive statistics were analyzed to determine efficacy of those delivery methods in the support of district superintendents' success. Further in the study, the comparison of data from county superintendents/designees and district superintendents served as the basis of the study's findings, conclusions, and recommendations for next steps.

Qualitative

Round 4 included this study's only qualitative question. The study employed a mixed-methods approach to be able to provide anecdotal evidence for the preference of one service delivery method over another. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described qualitative research as "based more on constructionism, which assumes that multiple realities are socially constructed through individual and collective perceptions or views of the same situation" (p. 12). For each respondent, their experiences with the best methods of delivering services to district superintendents were different, but patterns did emerge. Utilizing coding techniques, the researcher identified common themes, determined their frequency, and analyzed the results.

Round 5 Analysis

The final form of data analysis was to compare the responses from county superintendent/designees and district superintendents for each of the survey rounds. This

comparison served as the foundation for the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in Chapter 5 and involved the coding of the results for each group and then placing the results in separate frequency matrices for comparison. Each question's responses were analyzed, coded, and charted to ensure the ease of understanding for the reader

Limitations

The benefits of utilizing the Delphi approach include the ability to gain the opinions of experts in a particular field, the building of consensus amongst those experts, forecasting trends, and determining the application of results to similar populations (Nworie, 2011). There are, however, inherent limitations when conducting a Delphi study, such as: potential for low response rates, untimely data collection, the possibility of inserting researcher bias, and the possibility of not all respondents being true experts in their fields (Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

Low Response Rates

As of 2017, California had 58 COE superintendents and 1,025 district superintendents (CCSESA, 2017). The probability that the entirety of each population would respond was very small. However, the use of the researcher's personal network and the utilization of the snowball technique to acquire more respondents helped mitigate the low response rate in this study.

Untimely Data Collection

Additionally, the iterative nature of the Delphi method using rounds of questions to gather and analyze data means that the study takes at least 5 weeks to complete because each round allows 1 week to respond. Hsu and Sandford (2004) stated, "The necessity of taking a large block of time to successively complete a Delphi process is

inescapable" (p. 5). Over the course of the study period, there was also a natural attrition of study participants. County and district superintendents had the potential of either leaving or being removed from their positions, or they could have dropped out of the study due to unforeseen circumstances.

Researcher Bias

Because the researcher is an employee of a California COE, there was the potential for bias to enter the study. Although this form of bias is a natural result of the researcher's work location, the researcher's acknowledgement of potential bias prompted her to take steps to alleviate bias to the fullest extent. Bias in any form can exert pressure on respondents during a Delphi study, so it was imperative that any correspondence with the expert panelists was thoroughly vetted by the University of Massachusetts Global Institutional Review Board. This process also included a critical examination of the research questions by the researcher's dissertation committee to ensure that they were not leading or reflecting any opinions of the researcher.

Inclusion of Non-Experts

This research study was dependent upon the expertise of its panelists. The researcher was not privy to the respondents' experience, tenure, or reputation in their current positions. Nworie (2011) described the challenge of possibly including unreliable panelists that may have over- or under-reported their knowledge and experiences. However, Hsu and Sandford (2007) asserted that by generalizing the panelists' statements, the researcher could still gather usable results.

Summary

Chapter III presented the descriptive framework of this study, discussing how each phase was designed and executed. This study implemented a parallel comparative Delphi methodology to research how county superintendents/designees and district superintendents perceive the services and delivery methods offered by COEs in supporting district superintendents. The opinions of the target population of expert panelists were gathered, and the instrumentation was thoroughly outlined. Study reliability and validity was reviewed, and information regarding the field test procedures was discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study were discussed.

In Chapter IV, the researcher will present the results of the data collection and analyze and present the data findings. In Chapter V, a summary of the study will be provided, including findings, implications, and conclusions. Finally, Chapter V concludes with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

There is a lack of research on the types of services that district superintendents believe would benefit them, compared to what their COE superintendents think they need and are offering. COE superintendents attempt to provide meaningful services to school districts. However, the services COE superintendents think are the most effective and advantageous to district superintendents' success may not correlate with what the district superintendents think will assist them in their roles. This parallel comparative Delphi study sought to determine what both groups agreed upon and disagreed upon regarding COE-provided services. Chapter IV provides a summary of data collected and its findings.

Overview

This chapter presents a review of the purpose statement and research questions. Additionally, the research methods and data collection procedures will be outlined. An overview of the population, sample, and demographical information regarding the study's respondents will be detailed. Next will be the presentation and analysis of the data gathered. Finally, a summary of the findings will be provided.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed methods parallel comparative Delphi study was to first identify the services that the COE   provided to district superintendents that ensured their successful job performance from the perspective of both county superintendents/designees and district superintendents. The second purpose was to rate the importance of the identified services from both perspectives. The third was to identify the best methods of providing those services from both perspectives. Fourth, the study

sought the rationale for each service provider method. The final purpose was to compare the results from county superintendents/designees to the results from the district superintendents to determine alignment and efficacy.

Research Questions

County Superintendent/Designee

- Round 1: What services do county superintendent/designees identify as important for COEs to provide for District Superintendents in their county to ensure their successful job performance?

- Round 2: How do county superintendent/designees rate the importance of the services identified from Research Question 1?

- Round 3: How do county superintendents/designees describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

- Qualitative Round 4: How do county superintendents/designees describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

District Superintendent

- Round 1: What services do district superintendents identify as important for COEs to provide for District Superintendents in their county to ensure their successful job performance?

- Round 2: How do district superintendents rate the importance of the services identified from Research Question 1?

- Round 3: How do district superintendents describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

- Qualitative Round 4: How do district superintendents describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

- Round 5: Comparison of responses. How do the results from district superintendent responses compare to the responses from county superintendents/designees?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This research was conducted as a parallel comparative Delphi study in order to determine the perceived needs of district superintendents versus the perceived needs of COE superintendents in services provided to support district superintendents in their positions. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. Qualified experts were selected and used on two expert panels due to their knowledge of and competence with respect to the research topic (Golafshani, 2003; Habibi et al., 2014; Mohamad et al., 2015).

Both expert group members responded first to an eligibility survey to determine if they met the minimum qualifications of position and at least 3 years' experience. Once confirmed, the experts were split into the two groups of COE superintendent/designees and district superintendents. The experts were sent four survey rounds via Google Forms to encourage respondents to participate at the date/time that was most convenient for them. The research sought to determine (a) the top five services provided by the COE that supported district superintendent success, (b) their Likert scaled rating of the need for such services, (c) the best methods for providing those services, and (d) the reasons why a particular service method was chosen by the panelists. All panelists' responses were

anonymous, and the researcher did not know which respondents provided the information. The data collected was then analyzed and compared to determine similarities and differences between the expert groups. The totality of this process allowed the researcher to utilize the data provided to better understand the needs of the experts, and to determine possible reasons and solutions when the data was divergent (Nworie, 2011).

Population

For this study, the population from which a sample could be drawn was determined by the research questions. The study's purpose was to determine the similarities and differences in responses of COE superintendents/designees and district superintendents. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2005), as of 2005, only 34 of 50 states had structures similar to COEs, which they titled Regional Education Services Agencies. Located in those 34 states were approximately 10,902 public school districts. Therefore, it was necessary to choose a state such as California that had both COEs and a large enough number of school districts to ensure that the population of possible participants would be plentiful. The researcher sent invitations to participate to all 58 COE superintendents and all district superintendents in California, with the intention of gathering the largest sample size possible.

Sample

Patten and Newhart (2015) defined a sample as a subset of the target population representing the whole population. For the purposes of this research, experts were identified using the researcher's personal network, as well as a network of professional associates through CSESSA and the California Department of Education. Invitations to participate were sent via email. Purposive and convenience sampling strategies were

utilized to find and secure participants. To be considered an expert for this study, participants had to meet the following criteria:

1. A currently serving district superintendent or county superintendent/designee.

2. Three or more years serving in their current position.

3. A willingness to participate.

Although each school district was limited to one respondent, the superintendent, the COEs were allowed to have multiple respondents because they often utilize superintendent designees for multiple purposes. Table 1 shows the response rate for all California COE superintendents and district superintendents as well as the actual number of participants.

Table 1

Response Rate for COE Superintendents/Designees and District Superintendents

Study Participant Population	Number Invited to Participate	Number of Respondents	Percentage	Number of Actual Participants
COE Superintendent/ Designees	58	12	20.6%	11
District Superintendents	1086	27	2.4%	17

Demographic Data

All COE superintendents/designees who responded to the email invitation to participate met the qualifications for participation. To ensure anonymity, very little information on each COE participant was collected. Table 2 demonstrates the demographics of the COE from which the participants came. Student counts have been rounded up and size of the COE participating have been designated as "very small" meaning less than 50,000 students, "small" from 50,001-100,000 students, "medium"

from 100,001-250,000, "large" from 250,001-500,000, and "very large" from 501,000

and above, based on the numbers of students countywide.

Table 2

Size of COE Based on Number of Districts

County Office of Education Superintendent/Designee	Student Count	COE Size	Number of Districts	Number of Participants
COE #1	480,000	Large	30	1
COE #2	80,000	Small	20	3
COE #3	250,000	Medium	13	1
COE #4	10,000	Very Small	10	1
COE #5	500,000	Large	40	3
COE #6	65,000	Small	40	1
COE #7	30,000	Very Small	5	1

Note. Data retrieved from www.cde.ca.gov

The response rate for district superintendents was proportionally significantly less

than the COE superintendent/designee rate. Of the initial 27 respondents, only 17 met the

eligibility criteria, with all 10 failing to meet the 3-year experience requirement.

Although not all district superintendents were eligible to participate, those that were

represented a large proportion of counties (seven out of 58). Table 3 reflects the number

of eligible respondents, the size of their district with a rounded number of students

enrolled, the number of schools in the district (rounded), the type of district, the size of

the COE in which the district resides (as based on the aforementioned criteria), and

whether they are a public or charter district. The superintendent participants covered a

statistically relevant number of districts, which increased the validity of the results. The

districts included very small to very large counties; public and charter districts;

elementary, high school, and K-12 grade spans; and very small numbers of students (200)

to very large numbers of students (33,000) as referenced in Table 3.

Table 3

District Superintendent Participant Data

District Superintendent	Student Count	Size of District	Number of Schools in District	District Type	Size of COE	Public or Charter District
Superintendent #1	2,196	Small	3	9-12	Very Small	Public
Superintendent #2	4,466	Small	10	K-12	Medium	Public
Superintendent #3	1,600	Small	4	K-12	Medium	Public
Superintendent #4	2,300	Small	6	K-8	Medium	Public
Superintendent #5	7,200	Medium	10	K-12	Very Large	Public
Superintendent #6	1,200	Small	4	K-12	Very Small	Public
Superintendent #7	1,300	Small	5	K-12	Very Small	Public
Superintendent #8	33,000	Large	39	K-12	Large	Public
Superintendent #9	3,600	Small	7	K-8	Large	Public
Superintendent #10	7,000	Medium	12	K-8	Large	Public
Superintendent #11	200	Very Small	1	K-12	Large	Charter
Superintendent #12	10,000	Medium	16	K-12	Medium	Public
Superintendent #13	13,000	Large	19	K-12	Small	Public
Superintendent #14	900	Very Small	5	K-8	Small	Public
Superintendent #15	100	Very Small	4	K-12	Very Small	Public
Superintendent #16	400	Very Small	1	K-8	Very Small	Public
Superintendent #17	5,000	Small	11	K-8	Medium	Public

Note. Data retrieved from cde.ca.gov

Not every COE that participated in this study had a corresponding district or districts that also had respondents. Table 4 presents the COEs as numbered in Table 3 with the number of districts located in that county that participated. Of the 17 participating superintendents, only four corresponded to the COEs that also participated.

Table 4

Participation of District Superintendents Relative to COE

Participating County Offices of Education	Participating Districts in the County
COE #1	N/A
COE #2	N/A
COE #3	N/A
COE #4	N/A
COE #5	3
COE #6	1
COE #7	N/A

Presentation and Analysis of Data

In this section, the data collected during the four survey rounds from both district superintendents and COE superintendents/designees is detailed. The data is organized and presented with all the results of all four survey responses from COE superintendents/designees first, and subsequently all four survey responses from district superintendents. Data was collected in both quantitative (Rounds 1-3) and qualitative (Round 4) formats. Finally, in Round 5, a side-by-side comparison of data is presented.

Research Question 1: COE Superintendents/Designees

What services do you identify as important for COEs to provide for district superintendents in your county to ensure their successful job performance?

Round 1. The first round of data collection began with the creation of the first of four Google Forms that asked the experts: What services do you identify as important for County Offices of Education to provide for district superintendents in your county to ensure their successful job performance? The first survey was sent to 11 experts, of whom 10 responded. The experts were instructed to create a personal list of identified services, which were combined with the responses of all other respondents to create a data pool from which the top five responses were coded and extracted. These top five were then used to develop survey Round 2.

Analysis of Round 1. Responses from Round 1 were coded and the experts provided 20 unique services that they determined as important for COEs to provide to district superintendents. Table 5 shows the list of important services and the frequencies of response. It is organized with the most frequent response first and so on. Items with identical frequency of response are shown in the table at random.

Table 5

List of Important Services for COE to Provide as Identified by COE

Superintendents/Designees

Important Services for COEs to Provide to District Superintendents	Frequency
1. Superintendent Training and Support	9
2. Student Support Services Provided by COE	6
3. In-District Programmatic Support	5
4. Job-Alike Department Meetings and Support	5
5. Budget/Finance Service and Support	4
6. Regional Service Coordination	3
7. State Regulation Implementation and Support	3
8. LCAP Information and Support	3
9. Board of Education Governance Support	3
10. Human Resources Training and Support	2
11. Developing Collaborations with Outside Services and Partners	2
12. Superintendent Coaching	2
13. Small District Support and Training	2
14. Technology Services	2
15. Superintendent Searches	1
16. Equity/Diversity Programmatic Training	1
17. Free Services (any kind)	1
18. Mental Health Services	1
19. Juvenile Court and Community Schools	1
20. Charter School Support	1

Note. Total of 10 respondents.

The top five services were identified by the expert COE panelists as superintendent training and support, student support services provided by the COE, in-district programmatic support, job-alike meetings and support, and budget/finance service and support. Table 6 presents this data in a bar chart. It is important to note that of the 10 COE superintendents/designees who responded, they may have chosen all, some, or none of the most frequent answers presented subsequently.

Table 6

Number of Respondents Per Top Five Services

What services do you identify as important for COEs to provide for district superintendents in your county to ensure their successful job performance?

Service	Number of Respondents
SUPERINTENDENT TRAINING AND SUPPORT	9
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED BY COE	6
IN-DISTRICT PROGRAMMATIC SUPPORT	5
JOB-ALIKE DEPARTMENT MEETINGS AND SUPPORT	5
BUDGET/FINANCE SERVICE AND SUPPORT	4

Research Question 2: COE Superintendents/Designees

How do county superintendent/designees rate the importance of the services identified from Research Question 1?

Round 2. The top five rated responses from Round 1 were used to generate five subsequent questions based on Research Question 2. They were:

1. In terms of importance, how do you rank Superintendent Training and Support (professional development, networking, county-wide meetings, etc.) as a service provided to district superintendents?

2. In terms of importance, how do you rank Student Support Services provided by the COE (SELPA, Court & Community Schools, Technology Access, etc.) as a service provided to district superintendents?

3. In terms of importance, how do you rank In-District Programmatic Support (Curriculum, Nutrition, LCAP-identified district programs, etc.) as a service provided to district superintendents?

4. In terms of importance, how do you rank Job-Alike County-Run Meetings & Support (HR, C & I, Credentials, Technology, etc.) as a service provided to district superintendents?

5. In terms of importance, how do you rank Budget and Finance services and support as a service provided to district superintendents?

Each question received a separate answer that was ranked according to a 5-point Likert scale (*Not Important At All* = 1, *Slightly Unimportant* = 2, *Neutral* = 3, *Slightly Important* = 4, and *Very Important* = 5). Tables 3-7 show the number of respondents per point on the Likert scale as well as the percentage of respondents per point.

Table 7

In Terms of Importance, How Do You Rank Superintendent Training and Support as a Service Provided to District Superintendents?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Not Important at All	0	0.0%
Slightly Unimportant	0	0.0%
Neutral	0	0.0%
Slightly Important	5	50.0%
Very Important	5	50.0%

Note: Total respondents = 10; Mean score = 4.5

Table 8

In Terms of Importance, How Do You Rank Student Support Services Provided by the

COE as a Service Provided to District Superintendents?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Not Important at All	0	0.0%
Slightly Unimportant	0	0.0%
Neutral	1	10.0%
Slightly Important	2	20.0%
Very Important	7	70.0%

Note: Total respondents = 10; Mean score = 4.6

Table 9

In Terms of Importance, How Do You Rank In-District Programmatic Support as a

Service Provided to District Superintendents?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Not Important at All	0	0.0%
Slightly Unimportant	0	0.0%
Neutral	0	0.0%
Slightly Important	4	40.0%
Very Important	6	60.0%

Note: Total respondents = 10; Mean score = 4.6

Table 10

In Terms of Importance, How Do You Rank Job-Alike County-Run Meetings & Support

as a Service Provided to District Superintendents?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Not Important at All	0	0.0%
Slightly Unimportant	0	0.0%
Neutral	2	20.0%
Slightly Important	4	40.0%
Very Important	4	40.0%

Note: Total respondents = 10; Mean score = 4.2

Table 11

In Terms of Importance, How Do You Rank Budget/Finance Service and Support as a

Service Provided to District Superintendents?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Not Important at All	0	0.0%
Slightly Unimportant	0	0.0%
Neutral	0	0.0%
Slightly Important	2	20.0%
Very Important	8	80.0%

Note: Total respondents = 10; Mean score = 4.8

  Analysis of Round 2. In this round, the number of respondents was static at 10.

The data provided in Round 2 indicated that the respondents felt that each of the five

services carried some level of importance, as no participant chose Not Important At All

or Slightly Unimportant. Table 12 details the difference between the highest (Slightly

Important and Very Important) and lowest (Slightly Unimportant and Not Important at

All) number of responses for each question, as well as the range of responses of COE

superintendents/designees. However, in the Student Support Services category, one

respondent indicated that they were neutral on the importance of providing that service,

and two respondents indicated that they had a neutral opinion on the importance of

providing Job-Alike County-Run Meetings and Support. Budget/Finance Service and

Support garnered the top mean score of 4.8. The mean scores for each category are

included in Table 12.

Table 12

COE Mean Score Importance Ratings

Top 5 Service Areas	Mean Scores	Number of Responses: Slightly Important and Very Important	Number of Responses: Neutral	Number of Responses: Slightly Unimportant and Not Important at all
Budget/Finance Service and Support	4.8	10	0	0
Student Support Services provided by the COE	4.6	9	1	0
In-District Programmatic Support	4.6	10	0	0
Superintendent Training and Support	4.5	10	0	0
Job-Alike County-Run Meetings & Support	4.2	8	2	0

Research Question 3: COE Superintendents/Designees

How do county superintendents/designees describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

Round 3. In this round, nine experts responded to the Round 3 survey questions. Participants were asked to identify the method of providing the top five rated services identified in the previous round. Again, five subset questions were asked:

1. How do you describe the best methods for providing Superintendent Training and Support (professional development, networking, county-wide meetings, etc.) from Research Question 2?

2. How do you describe the best methods for providing Student Support Services as provided by the COE (SELPA, Court & Community Schools, Technology Access, etc.) from Research Question 2?

3. How do you describe the best methods for providing In-District Programmatic Support (Curriculum, Nutrition, LCAP-identified district programs, etc.) from Research Question 2?

4. How do you describe the best methods for providing Job-Alike County-Run Meetings & Support (HR, C & I, Credentials, Technology, etc.) from Research Question 2?

5. How do you describe the best methods for providing Budget and Finance Services and Support from Research Question 2?

Responses to each of the aforementioned questions were analyzed and coded, and their responses are included in Tables 13-17. The results of each question have more than five top responses because there were many ties in the data collection.

Table 13

How Do You Describe the Best Methods for Providing Superintendent Training and Support From Research Question 2?
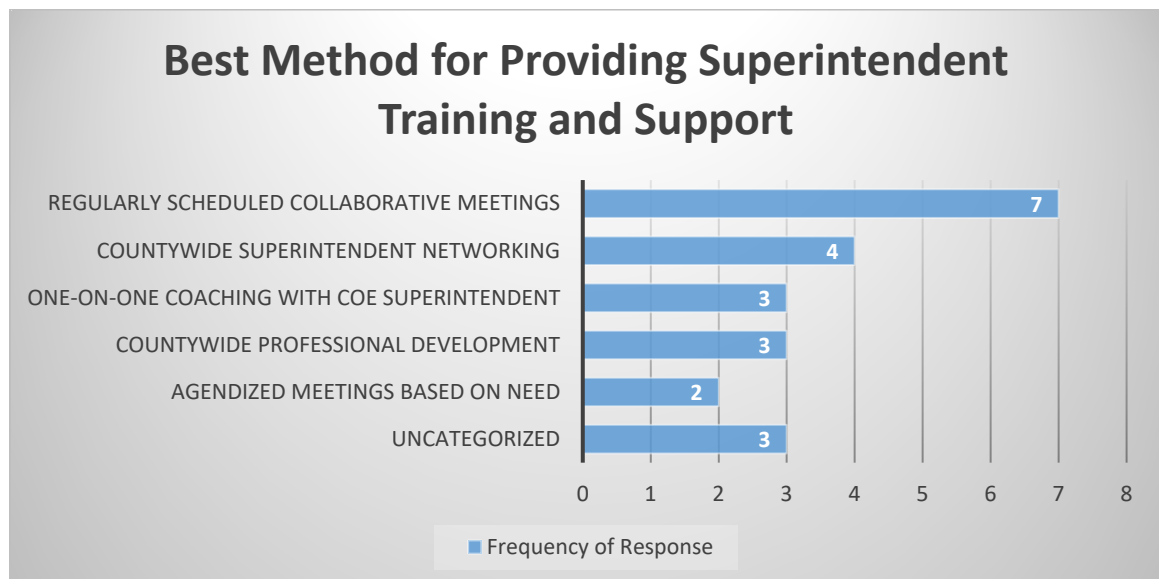
Note. Total Number of Participants: 9

Table 14

How Do You Describe the Best Methods for Providing Student Support Services As

Provided by the COE From Research Question 2?

Best Method for Providing Student Support Services

Method	Frequency of Response
REGULARLY SCHEDULED COLLABORATIVE MEETINGS	4
COUNTYWIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	3
AGENDIZED MEETINGS BASED ON NEED	2
CONTRACTING/PARTNERING WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES	1
COE LIAISON OR COACH	1
CONFERENCES	1
NEWSLETTERS	1
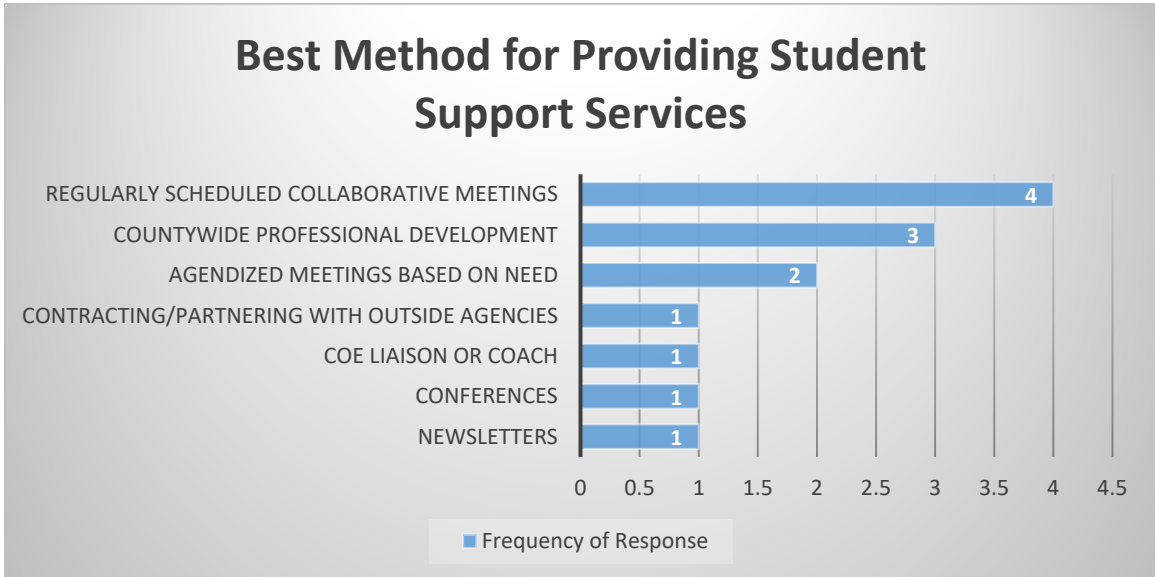
Note. Total Number of Participants: 9

Table 15

How Do You Describe the Best Methods for Providing In-District Programmatic Support

From Research Question 2?

Best Method for Providing In-District Programmatic Support

Method	Frequency of Response
REGULARLY SCHEDULED AND COLLABORATIVE...	4
TARGET ASSISTANCE BASED ON NEED	3
AGENDIZED MEETINGS BASED ON NEED	2
DISTRICT SITE VISITS	2
CONTRACTING/PARTNERING WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES	2
COUNTYWIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	2
COE LIAISON OR COACH	2
CONFERENCES	1
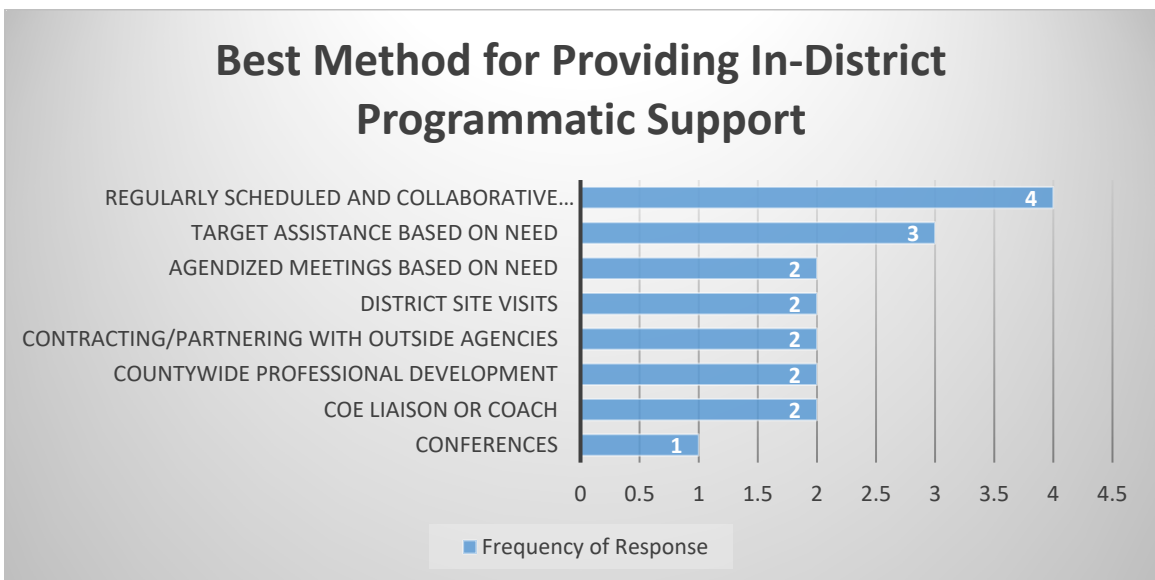
Note. Total Number of Participants: 9

Table 16

How Do You Describe the Best Methods for Providing Job-Alike County-Run Meetings &

Support From Research Question 2?

Best Method for Providing Job-Alike County-Run Meetings and Support

Category	Frequency of Response
REGULARLY SCHEDULED AND COLLABORATIVE…	5
AGENDIZED MEETINGS BASED ON NEED	3
COUNTYWIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	3
CONTRACTING/PARTNERING WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES	1
CONFERENCES	1
NEWSLETTERS	1
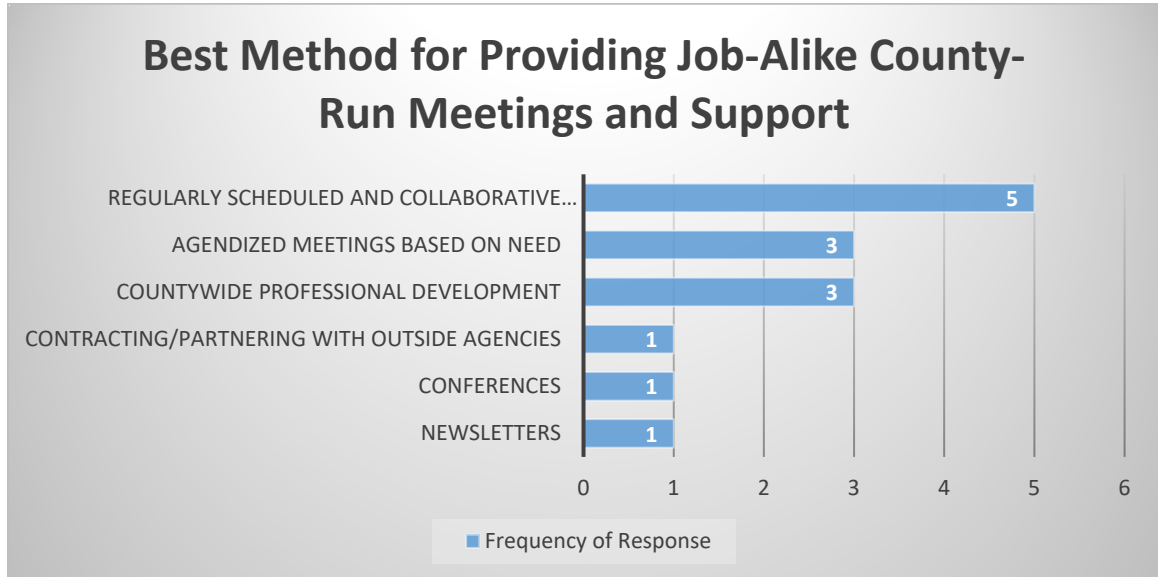
Note. Total Number of Participants: 9

Table 17

How Do You Describe the Best Method for Providing Budget/Finance Service and

Support as a Service Provided to District Superintendents?

Best Method for Providing Budget/Finance Services and Support

Category	Frequency of Response
REGULARLY SCHEDULED AND COLLABORATIVE…	6
COE PROVIDED LIAISON OR COACH	2
ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS WITH COE SUPERINTENDENT	2
COUNTYWIDE NETWORKING	2
COUNTYWIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	2
AGENDIZED MEETINGS BASED ON NEED	1
CONTRACTING/PARTNERING WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES	1
CONFERENCES	1
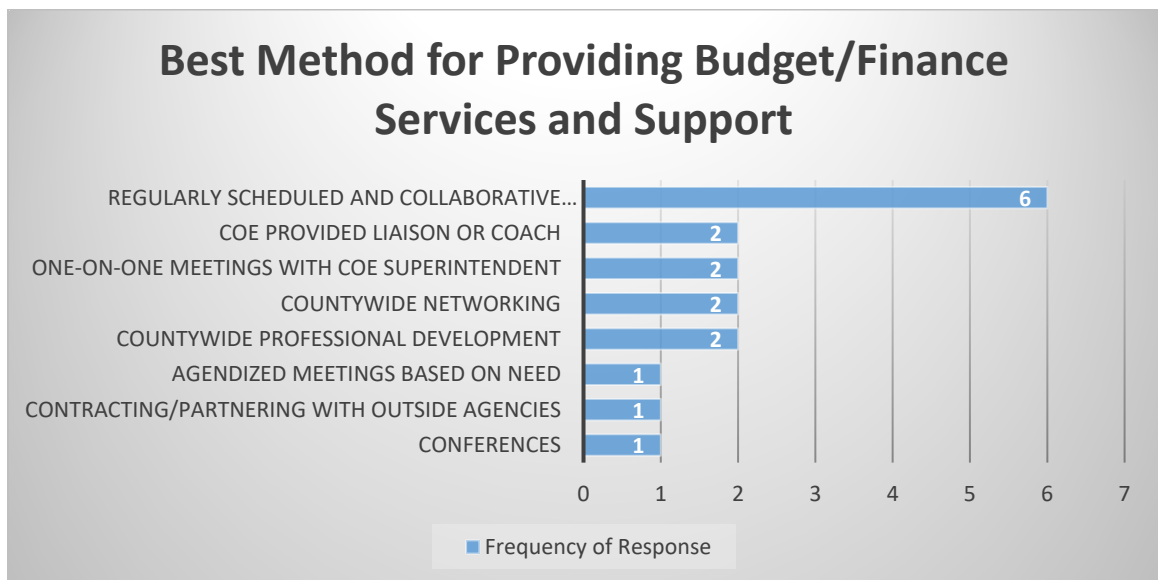
Note. Total Number of Participants: 9

Analysis of Round 3. In Round 3, the county superintendents/designees were asked to determine the top service delivery method for each of the top five services identified in Round 1. Although there were more than five service delivery methods identified for each category due in part to the low number of respondents, there were clear results gathered for the service areas of Superintendent Training and Support and Budget/Finance Service and Support. For each of these services, the next highest-ranking choice was three or more responses behind the top choice. Additionally, it was noted that the percentage of respondents who chose the top service delivery method for three out of the five service areas was 55% or above. The results for the other three categories were not as delineated because their top response was one or two points behind the leader in their category. However, the data did produce a surprising result. The top service delivery method chosen by county superintendents/designees for all five services was regularly scheduled collaborative meetings, as notated in Table 18.

Table 18

COE Service Delivery Methods

Top 5 Service Areas	Top Service Delivery Method	Number of Respondents Who Chose Service Method	Percentage of Respondents
Superintendent Training and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	7	77.7%
Student Support Services Provided by COE	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	4	44.4%
In-District Programmatic Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	4	44.4%
Job-Alike County-Run Meetings and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	5	55.5%
Budget/Finance Service and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	6	66.6%

Note. Total Number of Participants: 9

Research Question 4: County Superintendents/Designees

How do county superintendents/designees describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

Round 4. In Round 4, the participants were asked to explain their rationale for the methods of providing district superintendent support as answered in Round 3. This qualitative type of questioning provided the basis for the mixed methodology in the study and gave a more comprehensive base on which to formulate the conclusions included in Chapter V. For this round, there were eight respondents. Just like Rounds 2 and 3, Round 4 was divided into five sub questions. The questions as asked were:

1. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of Regularly Scheduled and Collaborative Countywide Meetings for providing Superintendent Training and Support (professional development, networking, county-wide meetings, etc.) from Research Question 3?

2. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of Regularly Scheduled and Collaborative Countywide Meetings for providing Student Support Services as provided by the COE (SELPA, Court & Community Schools, Technology Access, etc.) from Research Question 3?

3. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of Regularly Scheduled and Collaborative Countywide Meetings for providing In-District Programmatic Support (Curriculum, Nutrition, LCAP-identified district programs, etc.) from Research Question 3?

4. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of Regularly Scheduled and Collaborative Countywide Meetings for providing Job-Alike

County-run Meetings and Support (HR, C & I, Credentials, Technology, etc.)

from Research Question 3?

5. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of Regularly

Scheduled and Collaborative Countywide Meetings for providing Budget and

Finance Services and Support from Research Question 3?

The data collected from these questions was analyzed and coded. Tables 19-23 provide a

visual guide to the panelists' responses.

Table 19

How Do You Describe Your Rationale for Selecting the Method of Regularly Scheduled

and Collaborative Countywide Meetings for Providing Superintendent Training and

Support (Professional Development, Networking, County-Wide Meetings, etc.) From

Research Question 3?
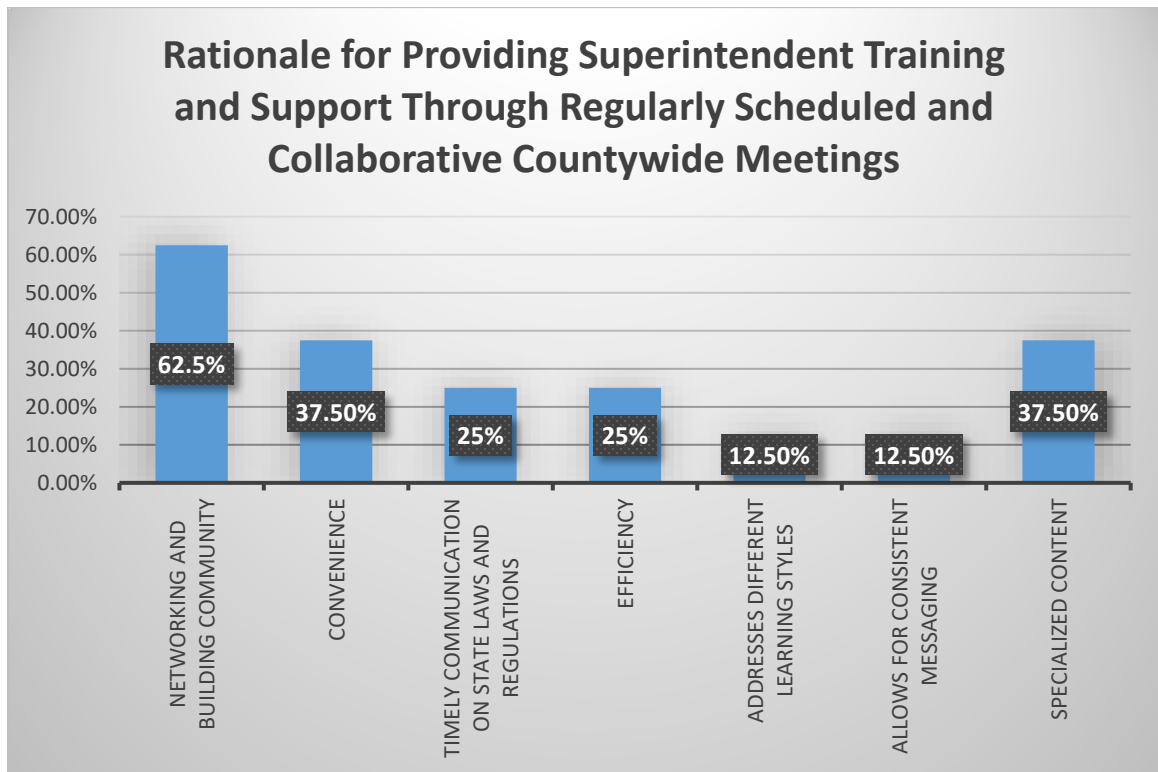
Note. Total number of respondents: 8

Table 20

How Do You Describe Your Rationale for Selecting the Method of Regularly Scheduled and

Collaborative Countywide Meetings for Providing Student Support Services As Provided by

the COE (SELPA, Court & Community Schools, Technology Access, etc.) From Research

Question 3?
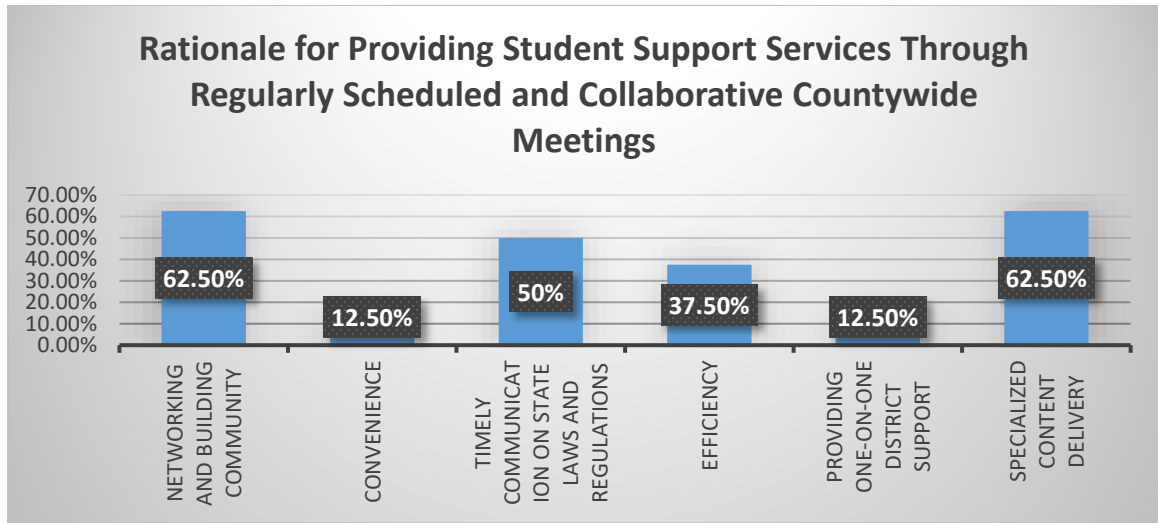
Note. Total number of respondents: 8

Table 21

How Do You Describe Your Rationale for Selecting the Method of Regularly Scheduled and

Collaborative Countywide Meetings for Providing In-District Programmatic Support

(Curriculum, Nutrition, LCAP-Identified District Programs, etc.) From Research Question 3?

Rationale for Providing In-District Programmatic Support Through Regularly Scheduled and Collaborative Countywide Meetings

Category	Percentage
NETWORKING AND BUILDING COMMUNITY	75%
CONVENIENCE	37.50%
TIMELY COMMUNICATION ON STATE LAWS AND REGULATIONS	25%
EFFICIENCY	25%
ALLOWS FOR CONSISTENT MESSAGING	25%
SPECIALIZED CONTENT DELIVERY	75%
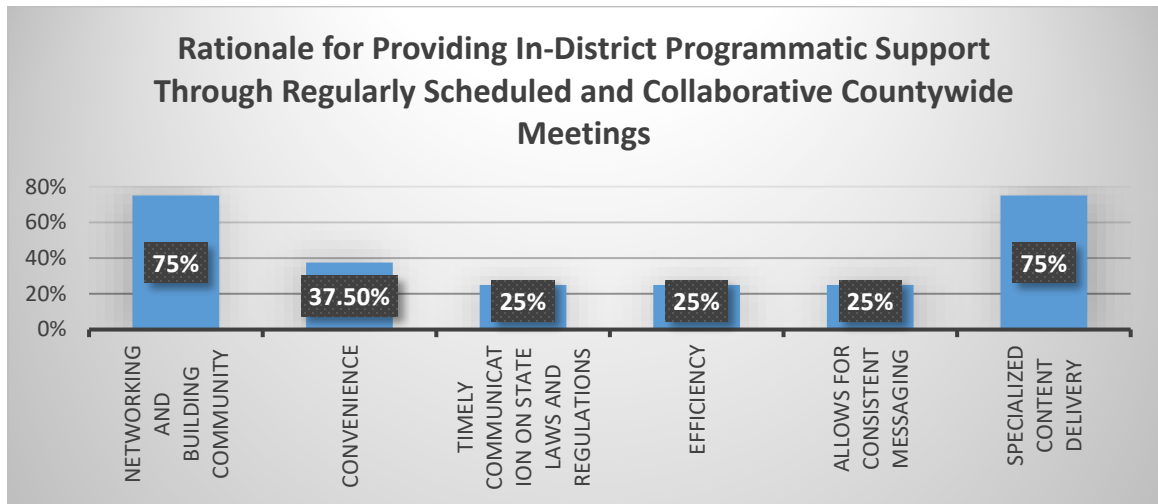
Note. Total number of respondents: 8

Table 22

How Do You Describe Your Rationale for Selecting the Method of Regularly Scheduled

and Collaborative Countywide Meetings for Providing Job-Alike County-Run Meetings

and Support (HR, C & I, Credentials, Technology, etc.) From Research Question 3?

Rationale for Providing Job-Alike County-Run Meetings and Support Through Regularly Scheduled and Collaborative Countywide Meetings

Category	Percentage
NETWORKING AND BUILDING COMMUNITY	75%
CONVENIENCE	25%
TIMELY COMMUNICATION ON STATE LAWS AND...	62.50%
EFFICIENCY	25%
ALLOWS FOR CONSISTENT MESSAGING	25%
SPECIALIZED CONTENT DELIVERY	75%
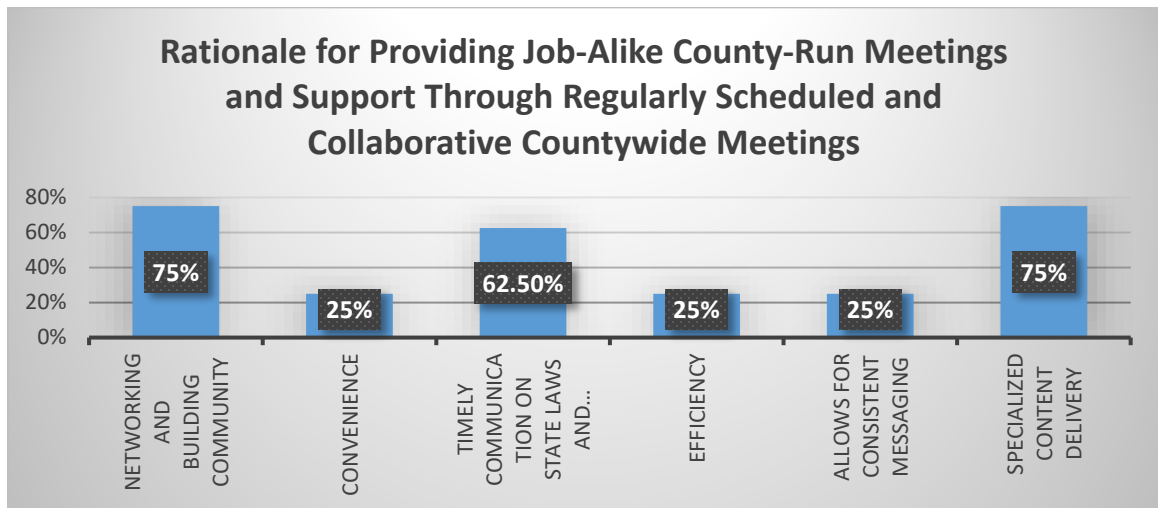
Note. Total number of respondents: 8

Table 23

How Do You Describe Your Rationale for Selecting the Method of Regularly Scheduled

and Collaborative Countywide Meetings for Providing Budget and Finance Services and

Support From Research Question 3?
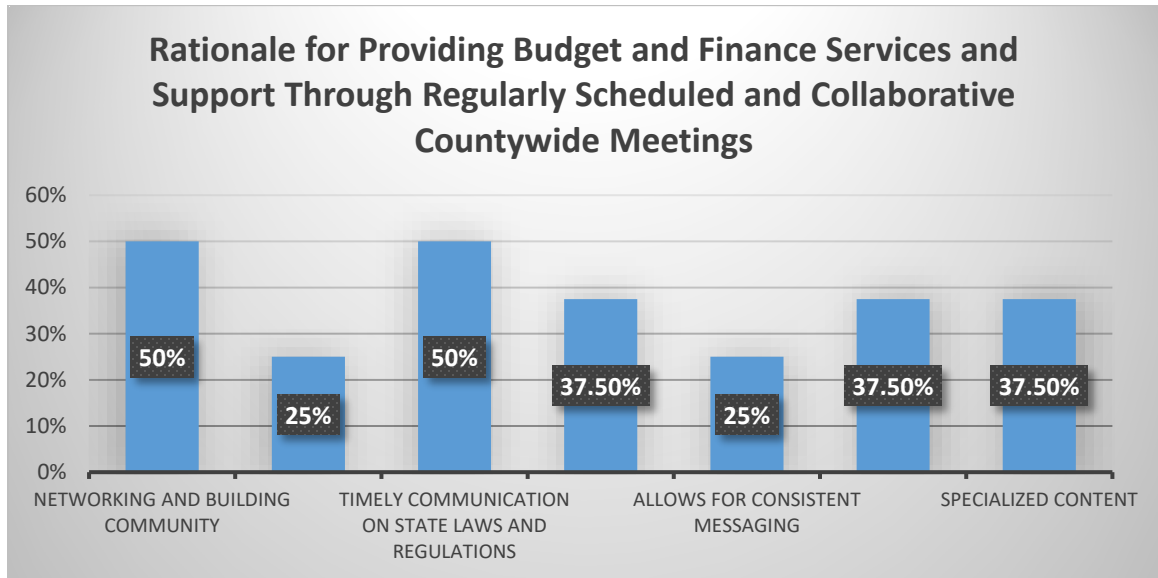
Note. Total number of respondents: 8

Analysis of Round 4. In Round 4, the COE superintendents/designees were asked

to provide a rationale for the service delivery methods they had chosen in Round 3. In

this round, the number of respondents was reduced from nine to eight. The data collected

for the rationale for providing Regularly Scheduled and Collaborative Countywide

Meetings in the service area of Superintendent Training and Support resulted in 62.5% of

the respondents indicating that Networking and Building Community could be attained in

that manner. Additionally, the COE experts responded that in order to provide In-District

Programmatic Service and Support, the service delivery method of Regularly Scheduled

and Collaborative Countywide Meetings would allow for Networking and Building

Community and Specialized Content Delivery to the districts. The COE

superintendents/designees further determined that to meet district needs in

Budget/Finance Service and Support, Regularly Scheduled and Collaborative

Countywide meetings would encourage Networking and Building Community and

Timely Communications on State Laws and Regulations, with 50% of the respondents

reasoning that they benefitted from the COE access to changes made at the state level and

collaboration with other districts. In the area of Student Support Services Provided by

the COE, the respondents were split in their rationales. The COE respondents stated that

Networking and Building Community and Specialized Content, both receiving 62.5% of

the panelists' votes, were their rationales for why Regularly Scheduled and Collaborative

Countywide meetings were necessary for superintendent job success. In the Job-Alike

County-Run Meetings service area, the panelists were also split at 75% between

Networking and Building Community and Specialized Content Delivery as the two main

reasons for why they chose Countywide Meetings. The top responses for each of the five

subset questions presented previously are notated in Table 24.

Table 24

Top Five Service Areas, Delivery Methods, and Rationales

Top 5 Service Areas	Top Service Delivery Method	Number of Respondents Who Chose Service Method	Percentage of Respondents (9 Experts)	Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method	Percentage of Respondents (8 Experts)
Superintendent Training and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	7	77.7%	Networking and Building Community	62.5%
Budget/Finance Service and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	6	66.6%	Timely Communication on State Laws and Regulations and Networking and Building Community	50%

Top 5 Service Areas	Top Service Delivery Method	Number of Respondents Who Chose Service Method	Percentage of Respondents (9 Experts)	Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method	Percentage of Respondents (8 Experts)
Job-Alike County-Run Meetings and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	5	55.5%	Networking and Building Community and Specialized Content Delivery (tie)	75%
Student Support Services Provided by COE	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	4	44.4%	Networking and Building Community and Specialized Content Delivery (tie)	62.5% each
In-District Programmatic Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	4	44.4%	Networking and Building Community and Specialized Content Delivery (tie)	75%

Research Question 1: District Superintendents

What services do you identify as important for County Offices of Education to provide for you to ensure your successful job performance?

Round 1. This section of the doctoral study's data collection began with the creation of the first of four Google Forms that asked the experts: What services do you identify as important for County Offices of Education to provide for you to ensure your successful job performance? The first survey was sent to 17 experts, of whom 14 responded. The experts were instructed to create a personal list of identified services, which were combined with the responses of all other respondents, to create a data pool from which the top five responses were coded and extracted. These top five were then used to develop survey Round 2.

Analysis of Round 1. Responses from the 14 participants were coded, and the experts provided 33 unique services that they determined as important for COEs to provide them. Table 25 shows the list of important services and the frequencies of response. It is organized with the most frequent response first and so on. For items with an identical frequency of response, they are listed in the table at random.

Table 25

List of Important Services for COE to Provide as Identified by District Superintendents

	Important Services for COEs to Provide to District Superintendents	Frequency
1.	Professional Development	10
2.	Budget/Finance Service and Support	9
3.	State Regulation Implementation and Support	9
4.	LCAP Information and Support	7
5.	Superintendent Training and Support	5
6.	Curriculum Support and Training	4
7.	Instructional Leadership training and support	4
8.	Special Education Support and Guidance	4
9.	Small District Support and Training	3
10.	Grant Writing and Implementation	3
11.	Socio-Emotional Support and Training	3
12.	Role Alike Meetings (Admin, HR, Fiscal, etc.)	3
13.	Communication Support to Community	3
14.	Expelled Youth and Alternative Ed support	2
15.	Sharing Best Practices across districts	2
16.	HR Training and Support	2
17.	Credential and Fingerprint Services	2
18.	Induction Services and Support	2
19.	Superintendent Searches and finding Admin Interims	2
20.	After School Programs and Support	2
21.	Equity & Diversity Training	2
22.	Foster Youth/Homeless program support	1
23.	Technology Training and Support	1
24.	Crisis Training and Support	1
25.	Bargaining Support and Guidance	1
26.	State Testing Support	1
27.	Legal Services	1
28.	Contracted Services with Agencies	1
29.	County-Wide meetings - Superintendent	1
30.	JPA / Risk Management Support	1
31.	Undesignated	1
32.	Free services	1
33.	BOE Training and Support	1

The top five services were identified by the expert district superintendents as professional development, budget/finance service and support, state regulation implementation and support, LCAP information and support, and superintendent training and support. Table 26 presents this data in a bar chart. It is important to note that of the

14 district superintendents that responded, they may have chosen all, some, or none of the most frequent answers presented subsequently.

Table 26

Top Five Service Areas as Defined by District Superintendents

Note. Total number of respondents: 14

Research Question 2: District Superintendents

How do district superintendents rate the importance of the services identified from Research Question 1?

Round 2. The top five rated responses from Round 1 were used to generate five subsequent questions based on Research Question 2. They were:

1. In terms of importance, how do you rank Professional Development as a County Office of Education services provided to you?

2. In terms of importance, how do you rank Budget/Finance Services and Support as a County Office of Education services provided to you?

3. In terms of importance, how do you rank State Regulation Implementation and Support as a County Office of Education services provided to you?

4. In terms of importance, how do you rank LCAP Information and Support as a County Office of Education services provided to you?

5. In terms of importance, how do you rank Superintendent Training and Support as a County Office of Education services provided to you?

Each question received a separate answer that was ranked according to a 5-point Likert Scale (*Not Important At All* = 1, *Slightly Unimportant* = 2, *Neutral* = 3, *Slightly Important* = 4, and *Very Important* = 5). Tables 27-31 show the number of respondents per point on the Likert scale as well as the percentage of respondents per point.

Table 27

In Terms of Importance, How Do You Rank Professional Development and Support as a County Office of Education Service Provided to You?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Not Important at All	1	6.7%
Slightly Unimportant	3	20.0%
Neutral	4	26.7%
Slightly Important	4	26.7%
Very Important	3	20.0%

Note: Total respondents = 15; Mean score = 3.33

Table 28

In Terms of Importance, How Do You Rank Budget/Finance Service and Support as a County Office of Education Service Provided to You?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Not Important at All	1	6.7%
Slightly Unimportant	2	13.3%
Neutral	3	20.0%
Slightly Important	4	26.7%
Very Important	5	33.3%

Note: Total respondents = 15; Mean score = 3.67

Table 29

In Terms of Importance, How Do You Rank State Regulation Implementation and

Support as a County Office of Education Service Provided to You?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Not Important at All	3	20.0%
Slightly Unimportant	2	13.3%
Neutral	1	6.7%%
Slightly Important	5	33.3%
Very Important	4	26.7%

Note: Total respondents = 15; Mean score = 3.33

Table 30

In Terms of Importance, How Do You Rank LCAP Information and Support as a County

Office of Education Service Provided to You?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Not Important at All	1	6.7%
Slightly Unimportant	3	20.0%
Neutral	3	20.0%
Slightly Important	5	33.3%
Very Important	3	20.0%

Note: Total respondents = 15; Mean score = 3.4

Table 31

In Terms of Importance, How Do You Rank Superintendent Training and Support as a

County Office of Education Service Provided to You?

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Not Important at All	4	26.7%
Slightly Unimportant	3	20.0%
Neutral	2	13.3%
Slightly Important	5	33.3%
Very Important	1	6.7%

Note: Total respondents = 15; Mean score = 2.73

Analysis of Round 2. In this round, one more district superintendent responded,

increasing the number of respondents to 15. The data provided in Round 2 indicated that

the respondents were split in their opinions in each of the five categories. No scaled point had a zero response in any category. Table 32 details the difference between the highest (Slightly Important and Very Important), neutral, and lowest (Slightly Unimportant and Not Important at All) number of responses for each question and shows the range of responses of district superintendents. In all five categories, the number of Slightly Important and Very Important response combined was greater than the number of Slightly Unimportant and Not Important At All responses combined. However, in the Superintendent Training and Support service category, the number of Slightly Important and Very Important responses combined was only one more than the number of Slightly Unimportant and Not Important At All responses combined. This resulted in a mean score of 2.73, making it the lowest mean of all five categories. Budget/Finance Service and Support had the highest mean score of 3.67.

Table 32

Comparison of Responses for Top Five Service Areas

Top 5 Service Areas	Mean Score	Number of Responses: Slightly Important and Very Important	Number of Responses: Neutral	Number of Responses: Slightly Unimportant and Not Important at all
Budget/Finance Service and Support	3.67	9	3	3
LCAP Services	3.40	8	3	4
Professional Development	3.33	7	4	4
State Regulation Implementation	3.33	9	1	5
Superintendent Training	2.73	7	2	6

Research Question 3: District Superintendents

How do district superintendents describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

Round 3. In this round, 16 experts responded to the Round 3 survey questions. Participants were asked to identify the method of providing the top five rated services identified in the previous round. Again, five subset questions were asked:

1. How do you describe the best method for providing Professional Development from Research Question 2?

2. How do you describe the best method for providing Budget/Finance Service and Support from Research Question 2?

3. How do you describe the best method for providing State Regulation Implementation and Support from Research Question 2?

4. How do you describe the best method for providing LCAP Information and Support from Research Question 2?

5. How do you describe the best method for providing Superintendent Training and Support from Research Question 2?

Responses to each of the aforementioned questions were analyzed and coded, and their top five responses are included in Tables 33-37.

Table 33

How Do You Describe the Best Method for Providing Professional Development From

Research Question 2?

Best Method for Providing Professional Development

Method	Frequency of Response
OFFERING DISTRICT SPECIFIC TRAINING	12
TIMELY AND RELEVANT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	5
OFFERING A WIDE VARIETY OF TRAININGS	4
COE PAYS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	4
REGULAR AND TIMELY MEETINGS WITH DISTRICT…	3
UNDESIGNATED	3
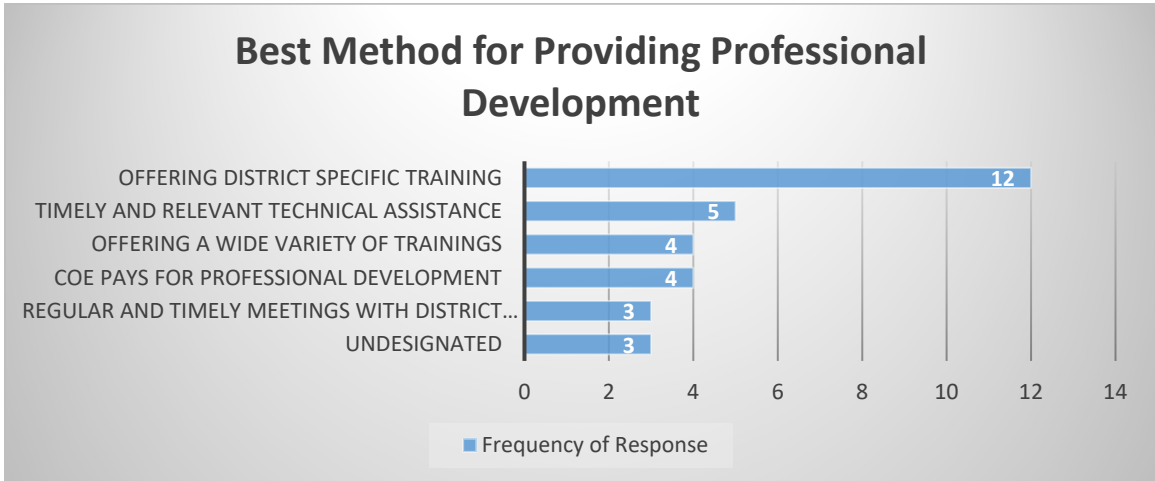
Note. Total Number of Participants: 16

Table 34

How Do You Describe the Best Method for Providing Budget/Finance Service and

Support From Research Question 2?

Best Method for Providing Budget/Finance Services and Support

Method	Frequency of Response
COLLABORATIVE AND TIMELY TECHNICAL SUPPORT	10
REGULAR AND TIMELY MEETINGS WITH DISTRICT…	7
TIMELY AND RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION	5
ONE-ON-ONE DISTRICT CBO SUPPORT	4
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	2
UNDESIGNATED	2
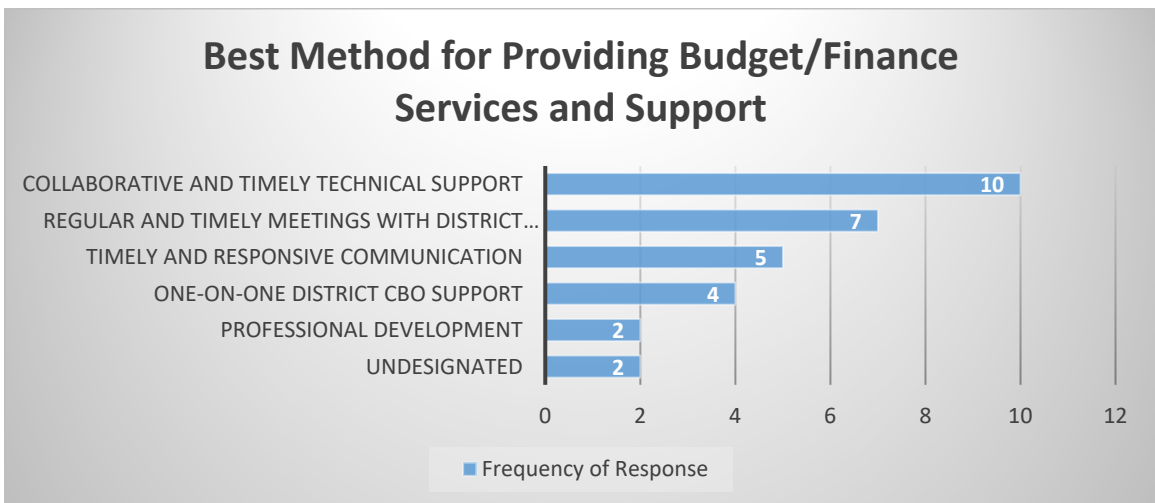
Note. Total Number of Participants: 16

Table 35

How Do You Describe the Best Method for Providing State Regulation Implementation

and Support From Research Question 2?

Best Method for Providing State Regulation Implementation and Support

Method	Frequency of Response
REGULAR AND TIMELY MEETINGS WITH DISTRICT…	9
TIMELY AND RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION	8
REGULAR AND TIMELY TECHNICAL SUPPORT	4
INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT	2
UNDESIGNATED	1
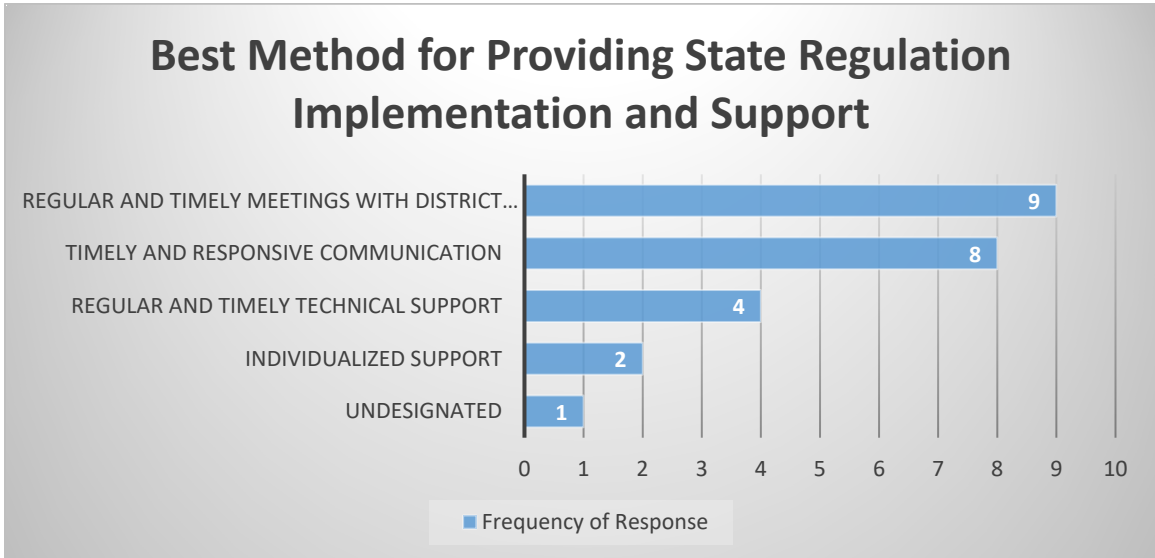
Note. Total Number of Participants: 16

Table 36

How Do You Describe the Best Method for Providing LCAP Information and Support

From Research Question 2?

Best Method for Providing LCAP Information and Support

Method	Frequency of Response
REGULAR AND TIMELY MEETINGS WITH DISTRICT STAFF	8
INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT	7
REGULAR AND TIMELY TECHNICAL SUPPORT	6
TIMELY AND RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION	4
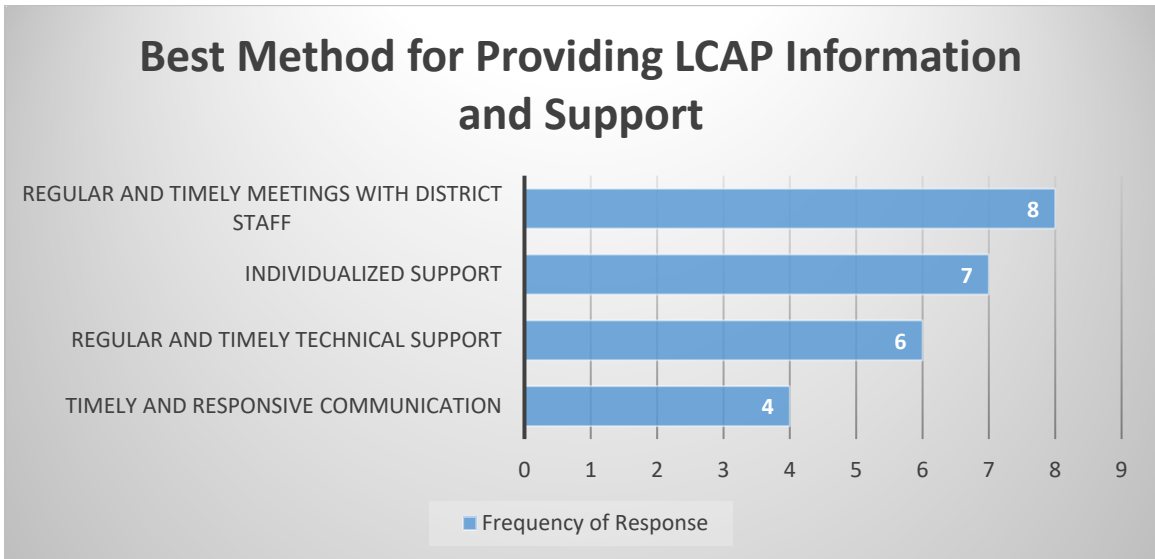
Note. Total Number of Participants: 16

Table 37

How Do You Describe the Best Method for Providing Superintendent Training and

Support From Research Question 2?

Best Method for Providing Superintendent Training and Support

Category	Frequency of Response
INDIVIDUALIZED MENTORING OR COACHING	7
REGULAR AND TIMELY MEETINGS	6
TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT…	4
COE SHOULD NOT PROVIDE TRAINING OR SUPPORT	2
UNDESIGNATED	3
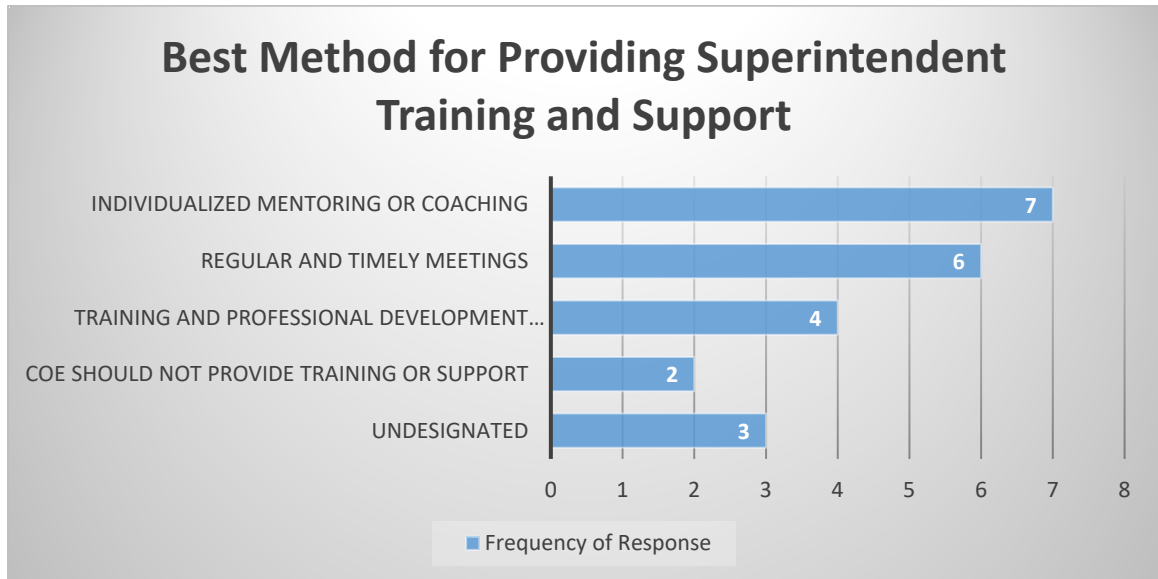
Note. Total Number of Participants: 16

Analysis of Round 3. In Round 3, the district superintendents were asked to determine the top service delivery method for each of the top five services identified in Round 1. Although four or five service delivery methods were identified for each category, clear results were gathered for the service areas of Professional Development and Budget/Finance Service and Support. For each service, the next highest-ranking choice was three or more responses behind the top choice. Additionally, it was noted that the percentage of respondents who chose the top service delivery method for four out of the five service areas was 50% or above. Finally, it was noted that the service area Superintendent Training and Support continued to be polarizing because two of the 16 respondents indicated that the COEs should not be providing training or support to district superintendents. The top responses for each of the aforementioned five subset questions are noted in Table 38.

Table 38

Top Service Areas and Delivery Methods

Top 5 Service Areas	Top Service Delivery Method	Number of Respondents Who Chose Service Method	Percentage of Respondents
Professional Development	Offering District Specific Trainings	12	75%
Budget/Finance Service and Support	Collaborative and Timely Technical Support	10	62.5%
State Regulation Implementation and Support	Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff	9	56.2%
LCAP Service and Support	Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff	8	50.0%
Superintendent Training and Support	Individualized Mentoring or Coaching	7	43.7%

Note. Total Number of Respondents: 16

District superintendents preferred their Professional Development to be offered via District Specific trainings. Their responses included the following quotes:

- Find what people want and give it to them.

- Build sustained rather than one time [sic] collaborations

- Polling districts on perceived needs/wants for PD

- The COE could provide funding to support PD that is relevant for each district.

- Survey districts as to what their focus is, and provide accordingly

- Meet with district staff to provide PD that districts need or fund district PD

There was also a focus on wanting COE-provided, in person professional development at the district and site level.

In the area of Budget/Finance Service and Support, the district respondents preferred Collaborative and Timely Technical Support. Their responses included the following quotes:

- Provide extra staff assistance when a school district is short-staffed

- County office being very responsive is critical

- Hands on support for the development of our budget

- Collaboration, teamwork...with appropriate staff

Support was requested through a variety of formats that included email, telephone calls, networking meetings, and individualized support.

Participants deemed that State Regulation Implementation and Support and LCAP Service and Support were best provided through Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff. Respondents indicated that networking meetings, countywide information updates, and individualized meetings were key to the success of district superintendents in these areas. One respondent stated,

> The best LCAP support I ever experienced was when the district was assigned a county support provider, who scheduled 2 full days in the district so that all staff involved had the opportunity to be trained and walked through completion of the document.

Finally, the service delivery method of Individualized Mentoring or Coaching was chosen for the service area of Superintendent Training and Support. As noted previously,

the need to have training and support via the COE split the district superintendent group.

However, those who chose mentoring or coaching stated:

- New superintendents need mentors and special support.

- The best methods for providing superintendent training and support
  include...direct and individualized support from former superintendents and
  district administrators

- (COE) Facilitating a mentor coaching relationship for new superintendents
  could be helpful

Research Question 4: District Superintendents

How do district superintendents describe their rationale for selecting the methods
for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

Round 4. In Round 4, the participants were asked to explain their rationale for the
methods of providing district superintendent support as answered in Round 3. This
qualitative type of questioning provided the basis for the mixed methodology in the study
and gave a more comprehensive base on which to formulate the conclusions included in
Chapter V. For this round, there were 12 respondents. Round 4 was divided into five sub
questions, as in Rounds 2 and 3. The questions as asked were:

1. How would you describe your rationale for selecting the method of Offering
   District Specific Training as the best method for providing Professional
   Development?

2. How would you describe your rationale for selecting the method of
   Collaborative and Timely Technical Support as the best method for providing
   Budget/Finance Service and Support?

3. How would you describe your rationale for selecting the method of Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff as the best method for providing State Regulation Implementation and Support?

4. How would you describe your rationale for selecting the method of Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff as the best method for providing LCAP Information and Support?

5. How would you describe your rationale for selecting the method of Individualized Mentoring or Coaching as the best method for providing Superintendent Training and Support?

The data collected from these questions was analyzed and coded. Tables 39-43 provide a visual guide to the panelists' responses.

Table 39

How Would You Describe Your Rationale for Selecting the Method of Offering District Specific Training As the Best Method for Providing Professional Development?
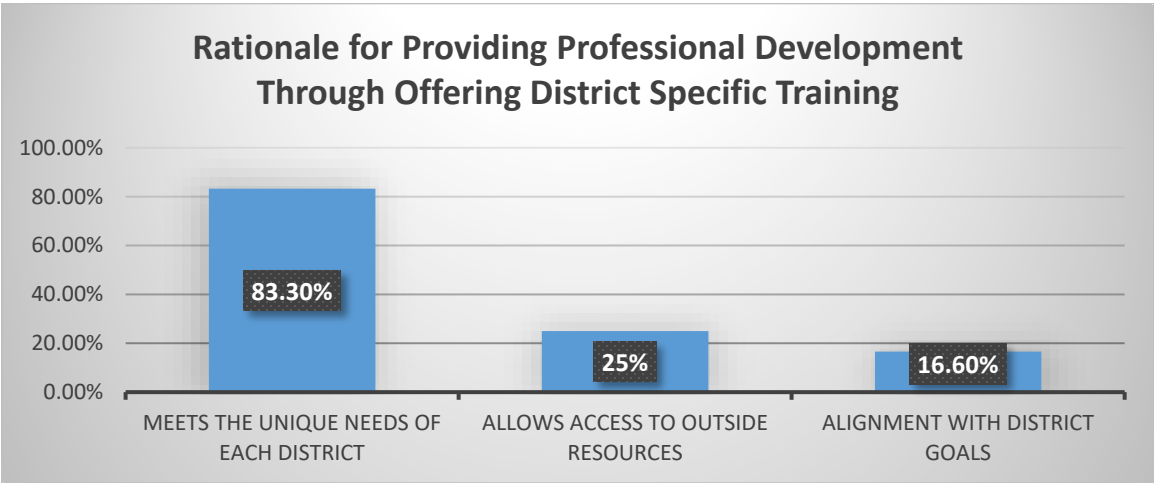
Note. Total number of respondents: 12

Table 40

How Would You Describe Your Rationale for Selecting the Method of Collaborative and

Timely Technical Support As the Best Method for Providing Budget/Finance Service and

Support?

Rationale for Providing Budget and Finance Support Through Collaborative and Timely Technical Support

Category	Percentage
DISTRICT BENEFITS FROM COE EXPERTISE	58.30%
MEETING COUNTY AND STATE TIMELINES	41.60%
UPDATED STATE REGULATION INFORMATION AND FORMS	16.60%
OTHER	16.60%
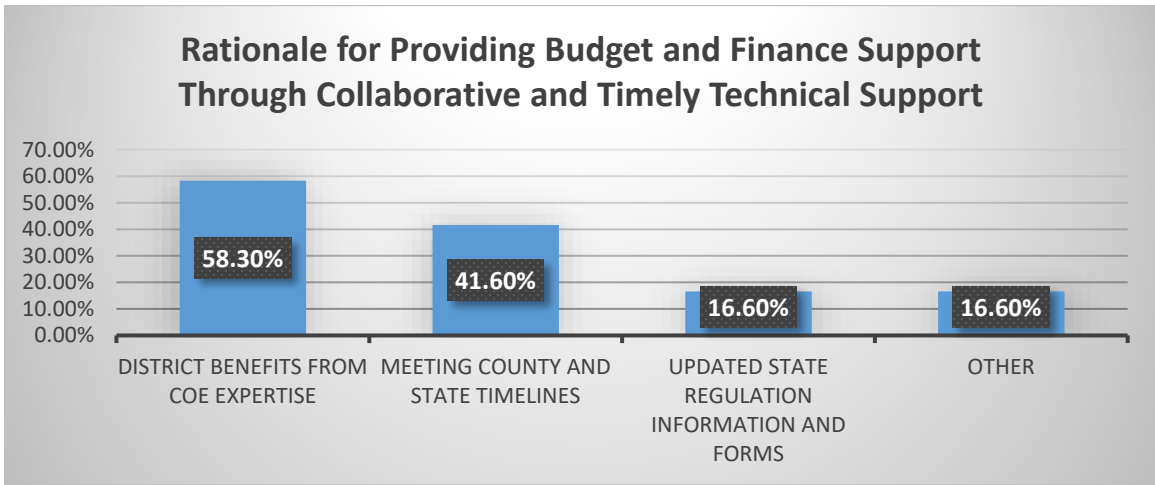
Note. Total number of respondents: 12

Table 41

How Would You Describe Your Rationale for Selecting the Method of Regular and

Timely Meetings With District Staff As the Best Method for Providing State Regulation

Implementation and Support?

Rationale for Providing State Regulation Implementation and Support Through Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff

Category	Percentage
ENSURES TIMELY DELIVERY OF RELEVANT INFORMATION AND COMPLIANCE	83.30%
LACK OF EXPERTS AT DISTRICTS	25%
ALLOWS FOR DISTRICT NETWORKING	16.60%
SAVES DISTRICTS TIME AND MONEY	16.60%
OTHER	16.60%
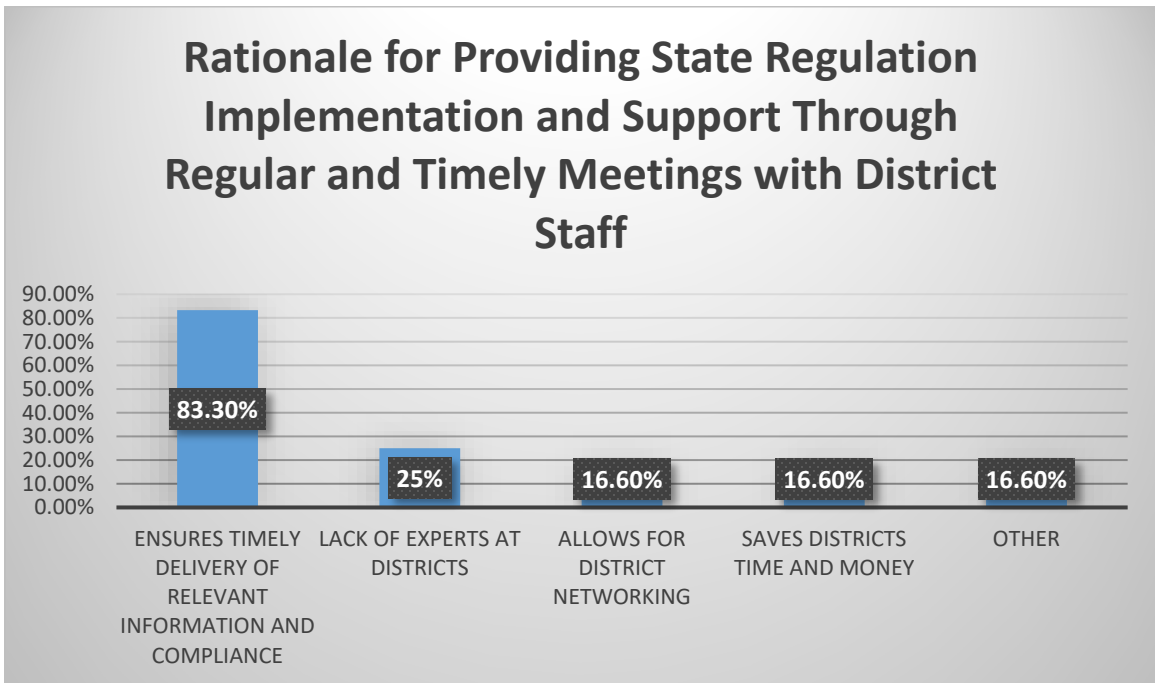
Note. Total number of respondents: 12

Table 42

How Would You Describe Your Rationale for Selecting the Method of Regular and

Timely Meetings With District Staff As the Best Method for Providing LCAP Information

and Support?

Rationale for Providing LCAP Information and Support Through Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff

Category	Percentage
DISTRICT BENEFITS FROM COE EXPERTISE	58.30%
ALLOWS ACCESS TO NEEDED RESOURCES	58.30%
ALLOWS DISTRICTS TO MEET TIMELINES	41.60%
DISTRICT-SPECIFIC SUPPORT	33.30%
OTHER	25%
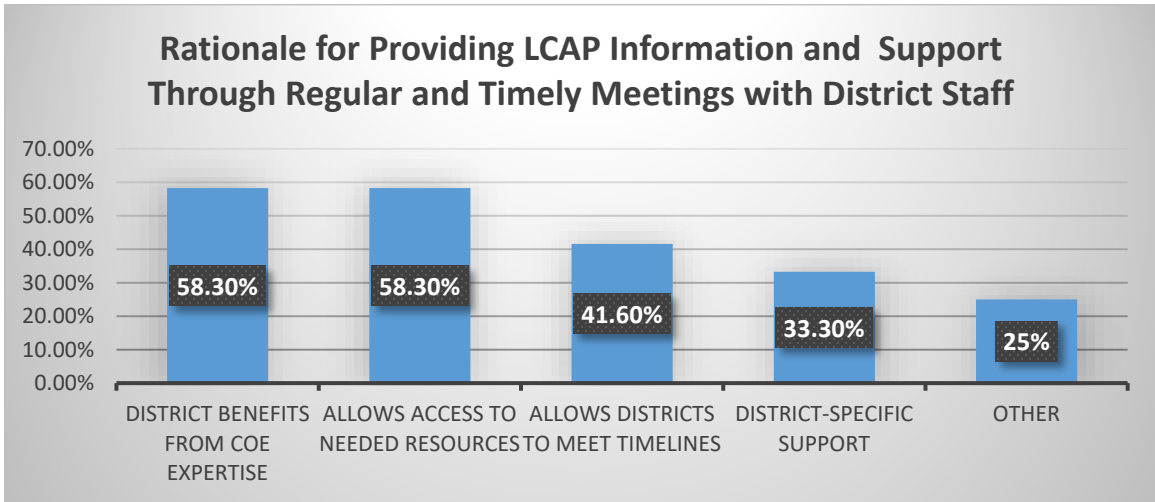
Note. Total number of respondents: 12

Table 43

How Would You Describe Your Rationale for Selecting the Method of Individualized

Mentoring or Coaching As the Best Method for Providing Superintendent Training and

Support?

Rationale for Providing Superintendent Training and Support Through Individualized Mentoring or Coaching

Category	Percentage
SUPPORTS INDIVIDUAL SUPERINTENDENT NEEDS	50%
COES SHOULD NOT/DO NOT HAVE CAPACITY	33.30%
HIGH SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER	16.60%
OTHER	8.30%
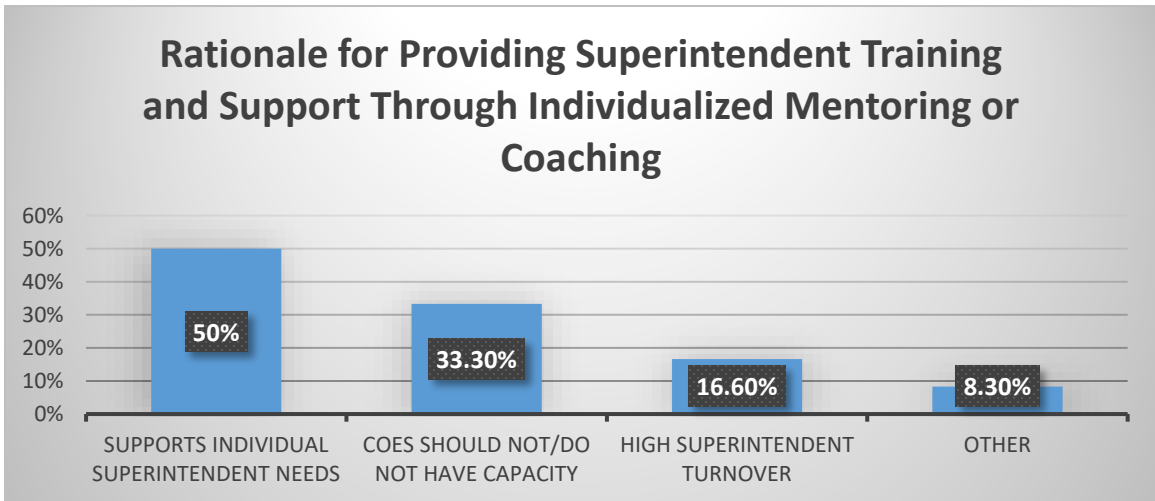
Note. Total number of respondents: 12

Analysis of Round 4. In Round 4, the district superintendents were asked to provide a rationale for the service delivery methods they had chosen in Round 3. In this round, the number of respondents dropped to 12. The data collected for the rationale for providing District Specific Training in the service area of Professional Development had a decisive result; 83.3% of the respondents indicated that meeting the unique needs of the district could only be attained in that manner. The experts further determined that in order to meet their needs in Budget/Finance Service and Support, they required Collaborative and Timely Technical Support, with 58.3% of Round 4 respondents reasoning that they benefitted from the COE expertise. Additionally, the panel responded that in order to comply with State Regulation Implementation, they selected the service delivery method of Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff; 83.3% felt that they would ensure timely delivery of relevant information and compliance. In the area of LCAP Service and Support, the respondents were split in their reasons for choosing Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff as their preferred service delivery method, with 58.3% of the respondents choosing either that the district would benefit from the COE Expertise and/or that the district would be Allowed Access to Needed Resources. Finally, in the service area of Superintendent Training and Support, 33.3% of the experts continued to indicate that the COE Should Not or Does Not have the capacity to mentor or coach them. However, 50% of respondents indicated that their reasoning for choosing Individualized Mentoring or Coaching was that it supported the individual needs of the superintendent. The top responses for each of the five subset questions presented previously are notated in Table 44.

Table 44

Top Five Service Areas, Delivery Methods, and Rationales

Top 5 Service Areas	Top Service Delivery Method	Number of Respondents Who Chose Service Method	Percentage of Respondents (16 Experts)	Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method	Percentage of Respondents (12 Experts)
Professional Development	Offering District Specific Trainings	12	75%	Meets the Unique Needs of Each District	83.3%
Budget/Finance Service and Support	Collaborative and Timely Technical Support	10	62.5%	District Benefits from COE Expertise	58.3%
State Regulation Implementation and Support	Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff	9	56.2%	Ensures Timely Delivery of Relevant Information and Compliance	83.3%
LCAP Service and Support	Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff	8	50.0%	District Benefits from COE Expertise & Allows Access to Needed Resources (tie)	58.3%
Superintendent Training and Support	Individualized Mentoring or Coaching	7	43.7%	Supports Individual Superintendent Needs	50%

Research Question 5

How do the results from district superintendent responses compare to the responses from county superintendents/designees?

Round 1 Comparison. In Round 1, COE superintendents/designees and district superintendents were asked to determine what services the COE should provide to district superintendents to ensure their successful job performance. District superintendents had a longer list of desired services with 33 distinct responses, while the COE superintendents/designees had a shorter list of 20 options. The top five responses are coded in Table 45.

Table 45

Comparison of Top Five Service Areas

District: Top Five Service Areas	Number of Responses	% Of Respondents (Total of 14)	County Offices of Education: Top Five Service Areas	Number of Responses	% Of Respondents (Total of 10)
Professional Development	10	71.4%	Superintendent Training and Support	9	90%
State Regulation Implementation and Support	9	64.2%	Student Support Services Provided by COE	6	60%
Budget/Finance Service and Support	9	64.2%	District Programmatic Support	5	50%
LCAP Information and Support	7	50%	Job-Alike Department Meetings and Support	5	50%
Superintendent Training and Support	5	35.7%	Budget/Finance Service and Support	4	40%

It is important to note that the due to initial limited responses from COE superintendents/designees, the district superintendent surveys were completed first. The researcher categorized the survey responses from Round 1 independently from the responses generated by COE superintendents/designees. Therefore, the results presented may have been influenced by the subsequent COE survey responses had the surveys been conducted congruently rather than consecutively.

Only two service areas appeared in both the district and COE list of responses: Budget/Finance Service and Support and Superintendent Training and Support. The district superintendents ranked Budget/Finance Service and Support as their second most desired service area, with 64.2% of the respondents (tied with State Regulation Implementation and Support). COE superintendents/designees ranked Budget/Finance Service and Support as their lowest of the top five service areas, with 40% of respondents

choosing this option. The second service area that the two respondent groups had in common was Superintendent Training and Support. As seen in Table 45, 90% of the COE respondents determined that this service area was necessary to ensure district superintendent success, whereas only 35.7% of district superintendents agreed.

    Round 1 Comparison Analysis. The disparity between the responses collected from the district superintendents and the COE superintendents/designees shows the disconnect between what the COE thinks that district superintendents need to be successful and what the district superintendents actually want the COE to provide. Although most of the COE responses to the question in Round 1 appear on the list of responses from the district superintendents (see Tables 1 and 25), the lists are not fully compatible.

    In looking at the top five desired service areas for the district superintendents, they rank Professional Development in a variety of areas as their number one need (71.4%), whereas the COE representatives clearly indicated that Superintendent Training and Support (90%) was needed for district superintendent success. District superintendents indicated that in the areas of professional development, "best practices" sharing and "free" or "affordable" opportunities in all areas of district management were needed for their success. COE representatives focused on the personal growth needs of the district superintendent through providing "a coach for the first year," "retreats" for collaboration, and developing "organizational infrastructure" to support the needs of the district. This disparity is examined further in the analysis of Round 3 results presented subsequently.

Another area of interest is in the reasoning of both respondent groups for choosing Budget/Finance Service and Support. Sixty-four percent of district respondents chose this service area as important and stated that they needed "articulation with state financial systems," "financial analysis and reporting" assistance, and "fiscal guidance and oversight." Only 40% of the COE respondents chose Budget/Finance Services and Support. Their reasoning was similar in that they were focused on "keeping districts solvent" and providing increased support to "very small district superintendents" who have lower funding rates.

The district superintendents ranked State Regulation Implementation and Support as their second choice in the top five desired service areas, with over 64% of the respondents choosing this option. Timely receipt of state regulation information was considered very important. One district superintendent stated, "anything that helps keep us compliant with state and federal gov [government]" and another stated that they needed to know the "updated legislative implications for schools/districts." COE respondents did not have this service area in their top five, with only three out of 10 choosing this option.

Finally, the district superintendents ranked LCAP Information and Support as their fourth most desired service area, with 50% of the participants choosing this option. Their responses indicated that "sharing Plan samples" and "LCAP development" were important in ensuring their success. However, the COE respondents ranked LCAP Information and Support lower, with only 33% choosing this option. Only one COE participant indicated that they "align their services and support to what districts have identified as priorities in their lcap [sic]."

Round 2 Comparison. In Round 2, the two groups of respondents were asked to rank the importance of their top five responses. Therefore, each group had five subset questions to answer. Each of those responses was ranked according to a 5-point Likert scale (*Not Important At All* = 1, *Slightly Unimportant* = 2, *Neutral* = 3, *Slightly Important* = 4, and *Very Important* = 5; see Tables 7-11 and 27-31). Because both respondent groups chose Budget/Finance Service and Support and Superintendent Training and Support as two of their top five service areas, Table 46 details the similarities and differences in how they ranked their importance, as well as the mean scores for each group's responses. Because this round of questioning was based on Likert scale responses, there is no anecdotal data to provide the reasoning behind either group's responses.

Table 46

District and COE Comparison of Service Area Mean Scores

Service Area	District Mean Score	Ranking Within Top 5 Service Areas	COE Mean Score	Ranking Within Top 5 Service Areas
Budget/Finance Service and Support	3.67 (-1.13)	1	4.8	1
Superintendent Training and Support	2.73 (-1.77)	5	4.5	4

In the Budget/Finance category, the district superintendent's mean score was 3.67, and COE superintendents/designees' mean score was 4.8 on a 5-point Likert Scale, with a -1.13 difference between the two means. Although the COE group ranked Budget/Finance service and support higher than the district superintendent group, both groups ranked this service as number one out of their top five. As noted in Table 45, results of the Round 1 surveys indicated that the district superintendent group ranked Budget/Finance Service and Support third in their top five service areas, and the COE

group ranked it as the fifth service area. When given the opportunity to rank their top five service areas using a Likert scale in Round 2, both respondent groups indicated that Budget/Finance Service and Support was the most important service area.

In determining the level of importance of Superintendent Training and Support, district superintendent group ranked it fifth in the top five service areas, and that data reflected in the mean score of 2.73. This data correlated to the data from Table 45 that showed the district group ranking Superintendent Training and Support fifth in the top five service areas they chose from survey Round 1. COE superintendents/designees ranked Superintendent Training and Support as the fourth most important of the services offered by the COE, with a mean score of 4.5. When compared to the data in Table 45 in which the COE group ranked Superintendent Training and Support as number one, the data from survey Round 2 is conflicting. Additionally, the difference between the COE and district means is -1.77. This indicates that there are as yet unidentified and underlying reasons for the large discrepancies between the COE and district ideas regarding what service areas are important for the COE to support.

Round 3 Comparison. Round 3 asked the respondents to indicate their preferred service delivery method for the service areas indicated in their responses to Research Questions 1 and 2. In this round, the district superintendents had some variation in their responses, but the COE respondents did not. Quotes from district superintendents regarding their service delivery method choices are reviewed in their Round 3 analysis section and will not be addressed here. Table 47 presents a detailed comparison of service delivery methods.

Table 47

Comparison of COE and District Top 5 Service Areas and Service Delivery Methods

District: Top 5 Service Areas	District: Top Service Delivery Method	COE: Top 5 Service Areas	COE: Top Service Delivery Method
Professional Development	Offering District Specific Trainings	Superintendent Training and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings
Budget/Finance Service and Support	Collaborative and Timely Technical Support	Student Support Services Provided by COE	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings
State Regulation Implementation and Support	Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff	In-District Programmatic Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings
LCAP Service and Support	Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff	Job-Alike County-Run Meetings and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings
Superintendent Training and Support	Individualized Mentoring or Coaching	Budget/Finance Service and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings

The COE superintendents/designees' responses to Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings as the top service delivery method for all top five services offered was an unexpected result. Because the responses of the district superintendents were varied based on their top five service choices, and the COE respondents did not show the same variation, a comparison was made based on quotes taken directly from each group's answers in Round 3 in the matching areas of Superintendent Training and Support and Budget/Finance Service and Support. Table 48 displays the differentiation in approach regarding the same service delivery method.

Table 48

Comparison of Responses Regarding Chosen Service Delivery Methods

Service Provided	COE: Top Service Delivery Method	Quotes from COE Respondents	District Top Service Delivery Method	Quotes from District Respondents
Superintendent Training and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	• "Networking meetings" • "County-wide meetings" • "Regularly scheduled meetings"	Individualized Mentoring or Coaching	• "New superintendents need mentors and special support" • "The best methods for providing superintendent training and support include...direct and individualized support from former superintendents and district administrators" • "(COE) Facilitating a mentor coaching relationship for new superintendents could be helpful"
Budget/Finance Service and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	• "Whole group meetings" • "Monthly meetings and individual as needed" • "Workshops" • "Countywide meetings"	Collaborative and Timely Technical Support	• "Provide extra staff assistance when a school district is short-staffed" • "County office being very responsive is critical" • "Hands on support for the development of our budget"

It is clear that the district superintendents are requesting hands-on, differentiated support from their COEs. However, the COE response is to provide whole group and networking meetings with little one-on-one assistance. Chapter V will address the disconnect between the two groups in more detail.

Round 4 Comparison

Round 4 differed from Rounds 1, 2, and 3 because it was qualitative instead of quantitative. This qualitative type of questioning provided the basis for the mixed methodology in the study, and gave a more comprehensive base on which to formulate the conclusions presented in Chapter V. A qualitative research question allowed the

researcher to ask why the groups selected a particular service delivery method and allowed for multiple views of the same information that was collected.

In Round 4, the participants from both groups were asked to explain their rationale for the methods of providing district superintendent support given in Round 3. Each group had five questions to answer, one for each service delivery methods they had chosen. Because only two of the top five services matched from the district superintendent and COE superintendent/designee respondents, a thorough comparison of all five rationales could not be conducted. A study of the shared service methods and methods of delivery for the categories of Superintendent Training and Support and Budget/Finance Service and Support, as well as quotes attributed to both groups, are provided in Tables 49, 50, and 51.

Table 49

Rationales for Selecting Service Delivery Methods

District: Top Service Areas	District: Top Service Delivery Method	Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method	County: Top Service Delivery Model	County: Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method
Budget/Finance Service and Support	Collaborative and Timely Technical Support	District Benefits from COE Expertise	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	Timely Communication on State Laws and Regulations
Superintendent Training and Support	Individualized Mentoring or Coaching	Supports Individual Superintendent Needs	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	Networking and Building Community

Table 50

District and COE Respondent Quotes Regarding Rationale for Selection of Service

Delivery Methods for Budget/Finance Service and Support

	District Superintendent Responses	
Top Service Delivery Method	Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method	Quotes Regarding Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method
Collaborative and Timely Technical Support	District Benefits from COE Expertise	● "Having a county office that has the required knowledge and is available greatly assists our small school district in meeting the many deadlines the state and federal agencies demand." ● "it is an opportunity for COE to share their expertise in this area with the districts" ● "Having a COE and local network of experts is essential to have access to in order to keep the business moving forward while avoiding major mistakes."
	COE Superintendent/Designee Responses	
Top Service Delivery Method	Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method	Quotes Regarding Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method
Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	Timely Communication on State Laws and Regulations	● "There is always new information coming for the state so it's necessary to keep everyone update and informed." ● "This is crucial with our approval of their budget review annually and supporting the new staff in business positions." ● "This is an efficient way of providing technical assistance to a group of administrators who have similar work functions. This means everyone hears the same message and supports fiscal responsibility and transparency amongst the group."

Table 51

District and COE Respondent Quotes Regarding Rationale for Selection of Service

Delivery Methods for Superintendent Training and Support

District Superintendent Responses		
Top Service Delivery Method	Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method	Quotes Regarding Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method
Individualized Mentoring or Coaching	Supports Individual Superintendent Needs	• "Each district has superintendent turnover at different times. Also, each new superintendent comes in with a different set of skills and needs. Individualizing the mentoring or coaching to the individual targets the needs and helps avoid redundancy and wasted time on areas that are not needing to be addressed." • "With the huge turnover in administration we are seeing, it is imperative that COEs take the lead in training and providing mentors." • "I certainly find a more personalized approach to my learning as being more authentic and applicable to my work."
COE Superintendent/Designee Responses		
Top Service Delivery Method	Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method	Quotes Regarding Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method
Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	Networking and Building Community	• "This is an efficient way of providing technical assistance to a group of administrators who have similar work functions. This means everyone hears the same message and fosters collaboration and consistency (potentially) amongst the group." • "I believe that having regularly scheduled meetings creates an atmosphere where district leaders look forward to and know that the county will be providing regular updates on key topics, we become relied upon for up-to-date guidance and training." • "I have been a superintendent for 40 years...I have found this to be the most convenient method"

In reviewing participants' quotes regarding Budget/Finance Service and Support, it is clear that the district superintendents rely on their COE staff to provide timely assistance. District superintendents also rely on the COE to share their experience and expertise because they are the conduit between the districts and the state Department of Education. This is especially true for small school districts in meeting state guidelines.

Finally, the district superintendents indicated that for districts to move the school business interests forward, they must rely on the COE's expertise to avoid costly mistakes.

The quotes attributed to district superintendents and COE superintendents/designees in the service area of Superintendent Training and Support highlighted the differences in approach to, as well as the reasoning behind, each service delivery method. District superintendents stated that superintendent turnover was a concern, and that individualized mentoring and a personalized approach were keys to overcoming turnover. Additionally, mentoring or coaching was seen as an avoidance tactic that wasted district superintendent time and energy on training that was not applicable to their needs.

COE superintendents/designees stated that by providing regularly scheduled and collaborative meetings, they were creating networking opportunities for district superintendents to learn together. Collaborative group meetings also permitted the COE representatives to communicate the same message to the group, thereby ensuring consistency and encouraging teamwork amongst the district superintendents. However, COE respondents also indicated that group meetings were more "efficient" and a "convenient method" for providing training. The district superintendent group mentioned neither efficiency nor convenience as a reason for their choice of individualized mentoring or coaching.

Summary

Chapter IV presented shared the quantitative and qualitative data gathered through this mixed-methods comparative parallel Delphi study. Additionally, an analysis of the

collected data was conducted on both respondent groups, district superintendents and COE superintendents/designees, and a comparison and analysis of the two groups was made and presented. The purpose of this study was to identify the services   provided by the COE to district superintendents that ensured their successful job performance from the perspective of both county superintendents/designees and district superintendents. The secondary purpose was to ask the participants to rank the importance of those services. The tertiary purpose was to determine the best methods for providing those services. The fourth purpose was to explain the rationales behind the service delivery methods chosen by each group. Finally, the responses from both groups were compared to determine similarities and differences, as well as to analyze those results.

Chapter V will present the researcher's conclusions based on the data collected and the analysis in provided in Chapter IV. It will also detail the implications for action and make recommendations for future research. Chapter V will end with the researcher's closing remarks and a reflection.

Chapter V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a review of this mixed-methods parallel comparative Delphi study. Chapter V begins with the purpose statement of this study and includes the research questions for both the COE superintendents/designees and district superintendents. The research methodology is described, providing insight into the researcher's reasons for conducting a mixed-methods study. Next, the major and unexpected findings of the research conducted are reviewed and conclusions are drawn. Finally, the chapter concludes with closing remarks and the researcher's reflections on the study as a whole.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed methods parallel comparative Delphi study was to identify the services provided by the COE to district superintendents that ensured their successful job performance from the perspective of both county superintendents/designees and district superintendents. The second purpose was to rate the importance of the identified services from both perspectives. The third purpose was to identify the best methods of providing those services from both perspectives. The final purpose was to compare the results from county superintendents/designees to the results from the district superintendents to determine alignment and efficacy.

Research Questions

County Superintendent/Designee

- Round 1: What services do county superintendent/designees identify as important for COEs to provide for District Superintendents in their county to ensure their successful job performance?

- Round 2: How do county superintendent/designees rate the importance of the services identified from Research Question 1?

- Round 3: How do county superintendents/designees describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

- Qualitative Round 4: How do county superintendents/designees describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

District Superintendent

- Round 1: What services do district superintendents identify as important for COEs to provide for District Superintendents in their county to ensure their successful job performance?

- Round 2: How do district superintendents rate the importance of the services identified from Research Question 1?

- Round 3: How do district superintendents describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

- Qualitative Round 4: How do district superintendents describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2?

- Round 5: Comparison of responses. How do the results from district superintendent responses compare to the responses from county superintendents/designees?

Research Methodology

This study implemented a mixed-methods parallel comparative Delphi methodology to research how county superintendents/designees and district superintendents perceive the services and delivery methods offered by COEs in supporting district superintendents job success. The researcher chose this type of methodology to determine the areas of similarities and differences in the opinions of the target population of expert panelists. The two expert groups were gathered from superintendents/designees COEs and district superintendents across California. Seven COEs and 17 districts were represented in the findings.

Rounds 1-3 were quantitative in their methodology. In Round 1, each group was asked to identify the services provided by the COE that ensured the successful job performance of district superintendents. The information collected was separated by service area, and in Round 2, each expert group utilized a 5-point Likert Scale to assign the importance of the top five responses. Data collected in Round 2 was then used as the basis for Round 3 question that asked each group to determine the best service delivery method for each of the five service areas. Finally, Round 4 sought to determine why each group chose that service delivery method over any others in the data collection. This made the final round qualitative because it sought to identify, "practical and useful answers that can solve, or at least provide direction in addressing, concrete problems" (Patton, 2015, p. 152). The researcher conducted the fifth round as a comparative study of the answers collected from both groups with the intent to measure the similarities and differences in their responses and reasoning.

Population

Study participants were self-selected from COE superintendents/designees and district superintendents from across California. The researcher requested participation from all COEs and districts with the intent to gather as many experts from each group as possible. At the time of the study, there were 58 COEs and over 1,000 districts. Selecting the target population was vital to the efficacy of the study results because the data they provided can be generalized to apply to the entire sample (Creswell, 2012). A strong sample population ensures that the results of the study are valid and can be used to inform further research and inspire action among those who are belong to similar groups.

Target Population

The targeted population for this study was COE superintendents/designees and district superintendents who had been in their positions for at least 3 years and were willing to participate in the study. The size and location of each county and district were not limited because the researcher did not want to restrict the respondent pool. Ultimately the size of the districts and COEs was not utilized to compare responses, but this data was still collected. Future research in this area is discussed in recommendations for further research.

Study Sample

All COE superintendents and district superintendents were contacted via email. The study sought to find at least 15 in each participant group. However, the responses to the district superintendent request for participants numbered 24, and of those, only 17 met the criteria for participation. The COE participant pool was much more difficult to obtain; the researcher continued to ask for study participants for 4 months and only

located 11 experts who were qualified and wished to participate. To be considered an expert for this study, participants had to meet the following criteria:

1. A currently serving district superintendent or county superintendent/designee.

2. Three or more years serving in their current position.

3. A willingness to participate.

Initially, the COE superintendent/designee group had 11 participants. Over the course of the survey rounds, that number fell to eight. This left 72.7% of the total number of COE respondents from Round 1. In the district superintendent group, the number of participants started at 17 and fell to 12, or 70.5%, by Round 4.

Major Findings

The major findings in this study centered around the differences between the responses given by COE superintendents/designees and district superintendents in all four rounds of questioning. Because the objective was to identify which services the COE delivered, the importance of those services, service delivery methods, why those delivery methods were chosen, and how they affected the job success of the district superintendents, it was important to identify the similarities and differences between the two groups responses. The major findings and the explanations of each are organized according to the research question asked of the two groups.

Research Question 1: Major Finding

In Round 1, similar question was asked of each group. The purpose was for the COE respondents and the district respondents to indicate the important services provided to district superintendents that ensured their successful job performance. The question asked and the top five answers provided by each group are presented in Table 52.

Major Finding 1. The COE superintendents/designees were definitive in their response to question one, with 75% of the respondents indicating that they felt that district superintendents would not be successful in their positions if they did not receive adequate training and support. District superintendents were less certain that this was necessary, given that only 35.7% of the respondents indicated that personal training and support was necessary for their job success. One COE respondent stated, "Providing professional learning and structures to facilitate 'job alike' networks for purposes of capacity building and continuous improvement of leadership practice" was necessary to support district superintendent success. Others indicated that their COE provided a coach or mentor to support new superintendents. There was a definite emphasis on increased support for "small" districts that may not have access to needed resources and therefore the district superintendents would struggle to meet the needs of their district.

Table 52

Comparison of COE and District Top Five Service Areas

District: Top Five Service Areas	Number of Responses	% Of Respondents (Total of 14)	County Offices of Education: Top Five Service Areas	Number of Responses	% Of Respondents (Total of 10)
Professional Development	10	71.4%	Superintendent Training and Support	9	90%
State Regulation Implementation and Support	9	64.2%	Student Support Services Provided by COE	6	60%
Budget/Finance Service and Support	9	64.2%	District Programmatic Support	5	50%
LCAP Information and Support	7	50%	Job-Alike Department Meetings and Support	5	50%
Superintendent Training and Support	5	35.7%	Budget/Finance Service and Support	4	40%

District Superintendents were not as enthusiastic about receiving training and support from the COE. This indicates that there is a lack of confidence in either the support provided, or the in the manner that the support is offered. However, they did indicate that they wanted superintendent/BOE co-training and professional development aligned with their current work. The district data emphasized their need for personal training, support, and advice *when requested*. Finally, the experts expressed a need for "best practice" summaries to help them implement their districts' programs.

Research Question 2: Major Findings

In Round 2, each group was asked to rate the importance of their top five choices from Round 1. The purpose was for the both groups of respondents to answer utilizing a 5-point Likert Scale (*Not Important At All* = 1, *Slightly Unimportant* = 2, *Neutral* = 3, *Slightly Important* = 4, and *Very Important* = 5). Each group's answers are presented in Tables 53 and 54.

Table 53

Importance of Top Five Service Areas as Identified by COE Superintendents/Designees

Top Five Service Areas	Mean Scores	Number of Responses: Slightly Important and Very Important	Number of Responses: Neutral	Number of Responses: Slightly Unimportant and Not Important at all
Budget/Finance Service and Support	4.8	10	0	0
Student Support Services provided by the COE	4.6	9	1	0
In-District Programmatic Support	4.6	10	0	0
Superintendent Training and Support	4.5	10	0	0
Job-Alike County-Run Meetings & Support	4.2	8	2	0

Table 54

Importance of Top Five Service Areas as Identified by District

Superintendents/Designees

Top Five Service Areas	Mean Scores	Number of Responses: Slightly Important and Very Important	Number of Responses: Neutral	Number of Responses: Slightly Unimportant and Not Important at all
Budget/Finance Service and Support	3.67	9	3	3
LCAP Services	3.40	8	3	4
Professional Development	3.33	7	4	4
State Regulation Implementation	3.33	9	1	5
Superintendent Training	2.73	7	2	6

Major Finding 1. The COE respondent's data correlated with their answers from

Round 1 in that there were no "slightly unimportant" or "not important at all" responses

to any of the service areas. The district superintendents were in considerably less

agreement with the group's determination for their service areas from Round 1. In all

five service areas there were district superintendents that indicated that they felt that there

were "slightly unimportant" and "not important at all" identified service areas. In the

area of Superintendent Training and Support, the district groups responses in the

"neutral," "slightly unimportant" and "not important at all" combined outscored the

"slightly important" and "very important rankings." Because this round did not have any

anecdotal evidence collected, the reasons for the district superintendent responses were

not understood until Rounds 3 and 4.

Major Finding 2. One clear area of agreement between the two expert groups

was in the importance of Budget/Finance Service and Support for district superintendent

job success. Of the 10 COE respondents, 100% agreed that Budget/Finance Service and Support was "slightly important" and "very important" and had the highest mean score of 4.8. Although only nine out of 15 of the district respondents agreed that Budget/Finance Service and Support was "slightly important" and "very important," the mean score ranked this as their choice for the number one area of need. Again, as this round did not collect any anecdotal evidence, the reasons for either group's responses were not understood until Rounds 3 and 4.

Research Question 3: Major Findings

Round 3 asked the two expert groups to determine the service delivery method for the five areas they had selected in Round 2. COE superintendents were asked: How do county superintendents/designees describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2? District superintendents were asked: How do district superintendents describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2? In this round, participants were asked to provide a preferred list of service delivery methods; this format provided space for the experts to give anecdotal information. The data collected was analyzed; Table 55 presents the results of that analysis.

Table 55

Comparison of COE and District Top 5 Service Areas and Delivery Methods

District: Top 5 Service Areas	District: Top Service Delivery Method	COE: Top 5 Service Areas	COE: Top Service Delivery Method
Professional Development	Offering District Specific Trainings	Superintendent Training and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings
Budget/Finance Service and Support	Collaborative and Timely Technical Support	Student Support Services Provided by COE	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings
State Regulation Implementation and Support	Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff	In-District Programmatic Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings

District: Top 5 Service Areas	District: Top Service Delivery Method	COE: Top 5 Service Areas	COE: Top Service Delivery Method
LCAP Service and Support	Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff	Job-Alike County-Run Meetings and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings
Superintendent Training and Support	Individualized Mentoring or Coaching	Budget/Finance Service and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings

Major Finding 1. For all five of the service areas identified by COE respondents, the number one answer provided when asked what services delivery method they would choose was Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings. Included in their responses were statements that COEs have, "regularly scheduled timely meetings" and "operating high quality...countywide meetings." In regard to these meetings, they also stated that, "some are every 2 weeks and some are monthly" and "monthly meetings and individual as necessary;" these responses were noted as falling into the regularly scheduled category. There was also an identified need for the meetings to be collaborative, where "common issues discussions/networking" are addressed, and that the meetings include "input from the participants." Finally, one COE responded that they provide each district with a liaison for each department to ensure collaboration between the COE and the districts they serve.

Major Finding 2. District superintendents chose Individualized Coaching or Mentoring as their preferred service delivery method for Superintendent Training and Support with 7 (43.7%) of the 15 respondents choosing this option. District experts stated,

- "New superintendents need mentors and special support"

- "The best methods for providing superintendent training and support include...direct and individualized support from former superintendents and district administrators"

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- "(COE) Facilitating a mentor coaching relationship for new superintendents could be helpful"

The expert panelists are in agreement with Antonucci (2012) and Dabney-Lieras (2009) in that district superintendents have an educational background and follow the teacher-to-administrator pipeline. However, they are often left without a coaching or mentoring support system and can be unprepared for the role they have assumed.

Research Question 4: Major Findings

The final survey round was qualitative in nature and asked the two participant groups to share their rationales for why they chose a particular service delivery method for each of the service areas they had chosen. COE superintendents/designees were asked: How do county superintendents/designees describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2? District superintendents were asked: How do district superintendents describe their rationale for selecting the methods for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 2? Table 56 shows the comparison of the results for each group.

Table 56

Comparison of COE and District Service Areas, Delivery Methods, and Rationale

COE Top 5 Service Areas	COE Top Service Delivery Method	COE Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method	COE Percentage of Respondent (8 Experts)	District Top 5 Service Areas	District Top Service Delivery Method	District Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method	District Percentage of Respondents (12 Experts)
Supt Training and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	Networking and Building Community	62.5%	Professional Development	Offering District Specific Trainings	Meets the Unique Needs of Each District	83.3%
Student Support Services Provided by COE	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	Networking and Building Community and Specialized Content Delivery (tie)	62.5% each	Budget/Finance Service and Support	Collaborative and Timely Technical Support	District Benefits from COE Expertise	58.3%

COE Top 5 Service Areas	COE Top Service Delivery Method	COE Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method	COE Percentage of Respondent (8 Experts)	District Top 5 Service Areas	District Top Service Delivery Method	District Rationale for Selecting Service Delivery Method	District Percentage of Respondents (12 Experts)
In-District Programmatic Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	Networking and Building Community and Specialized Content Delivery (tie)	75%	State Regulation Implementation and Support	Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff	Ensures Timely Delivery of Relevant Information and Compliance	83.3%
Job-Alike County-Run Meetings and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	Networking and Building Community and Specialized Content Delivery (tie)	75%	LCAP Service and Support	Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff	District Benefits from COE Expertise & Allows Access to Needed Resources (tie)	58.3%
Budget/ Finance Service and Support	Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings	Timely Communication on State Laws and Regulations and Networking and Building Community	50%	Superintendent Training and Support	Individualized Mentoring or Coaching	Supports Individual Supt Needs	50%

Major Finding 1. The COE respondents were unified on their reasons for choosing Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings. In each instance, at least 50% of the experts determined that Networking and Building Community was the rationale for selecting their service delivery methods. Specialized Content Delivery occurred three times as a reason for choosing Regularly Scheduled Collaborative Meetings, and Timely Communication on State Laws and Regulations occurred once in their responses.

However, the district representatives chose varying reasons for each of the service delivery methods. In meeting their professional development needs, 83.3% of respondents determined the rationale for Offering District Specific Training as being Meets the Needs of Each Unique District. Additionally, the district experts chose Regular and Timely Meetings with District Staff to deliver content to them regarding State

Regulation and Implementation Support, with 83.3% of them stating the rationale for that

was that it Ensures Timely Delivery of Relevant Information and Compliance. Finally,

58.3% of the district respondents stated that they Benefit from COE Expertise and they

are Allowed Access to Needed Resources as the reason for wanting Regular and Timely

Meetings with District Staff for LCAP Service and Support.

Major Finding 2. Another theme that appeared in district superintendent

responses in Round 4 that is not readily apparent in the data presented previously was the

need for individualized services based on superintendent and district needs. Table 57

indicates how often phrases relating to individualized services appeared in district

superintendents' answers to the Round 4 survey questions.

This data indicated that the district superintendents are interested in obtaining

services and service delivery methods that work for their unique district circumstances.

A one-size-fits-all approach is not wanted nor warranted in their responses. In

comparison, the COE superintendent/designee responses in Round 4 included only one

reference to individualized support for district superintendents.

Table 57

District Superintendent Responses in Round 4

Round 4 Comments in District Superintendent Responses

Category	Value
Unique	4
Personal(ized)	3
District Specific	7
Individual(ized)	12
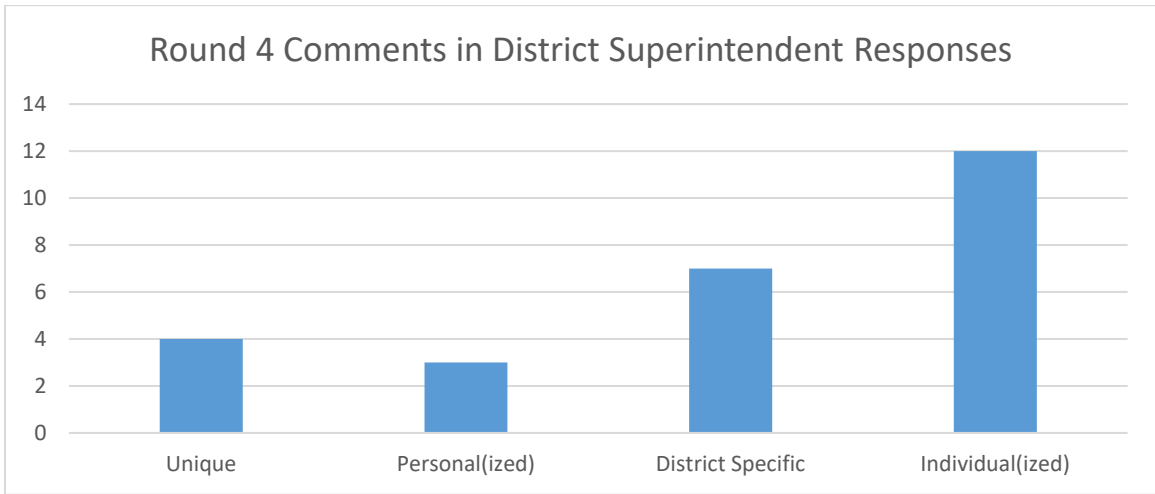
Unexpected Findings

The study data collected resulted in three unexpected findings:

1. As evidenced in their responses to Research Questions 3 and 4, the COE superintendents/designees rely heavily on providing district superintendent support via countywide and/or job-alike meetings. This is in direct opposition to the data collected from district superintendents who clearly wanted individualized training and support for both them and their district staff.

2. Seven district superintendents who responded to a section of Research Question 2 indicated that they felt that superintendent training and support was either "slightly unimportant" or "not important at all." This result was surprising and not understood by the researcher until information from Research Question 3 responses were collected. Although seven respondents in Round 3 answered that superintendent training and support would best be administered through individualized mentoring and coaching, others

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responded to receiving support and training from the COE superintendent in an unfavorable way. One respondent stated, "Support yes...training...Hmmm." Another respondent stated, "Honestly, I would rather the COE stayed out of the business of training and supporting superintendents. The COE superintendents I have known [sic] think that they are in charge of districts and this is unhealthy." A final expert stated, "I don't think this is appropriate work for the county superintendent."

3. Both the COE superintendent/designee and district superintendent groups identified Budget/Finance Services and Support as their number one service area need. One COE respondent stated, "There is always new information coming from the state so it's necessary to keep everyone updated [sic] and informed." Another stated that due to the annual review of their district's budgets, it was "crucial" to support new staff members in the district's business departments. The district superintendent group agreed with one respondent stating, "the best method for delivering support is to meet with Supts and CBO's in small service area groups, led by county support staff, who are then assigned to provide in-district, on-site follow-up support as needed." Yet another district superintendent stated, "The best budget support would be an accurate accounting of transactions between the COE and the district, plus hands on support for the development of our budget."

4. At least one COE superintendent/designee reported that their COE provides a liaison to district superintendents to assist them in accessing services and support from the COE. In their Round 3 survey response, the COE

superintendent/designee stated, "We provide each district with a liaison who help facilitate district support." Another response by the same expert stated that the liaisons "meet to coordinate support services across the county departments" and then "provide articulated meetings" to support their district superintendents.

Conclusions

Based on the research conducted in Chapter III, and the data collected through the parallel comparative Delphi study research questions, the researcher has drawn the following four conclusions.

Conclusion 1

Based upon the finding that both COEs and district superintendents want Superintendent Training and Support, it is concluded that district superintendents need individualized coaching and mentoring to ensure their job success. However, based on the narrative findings from district superintendents, it is further concluded that district superintendents would prefer that the arrangements to provide such mentoring and coaching be made individually by each district superintendent with the provider the superintendent is most comfortable with. Callan and Levinson (2011) wrote that coaching can be seen as a form of personal professional development in that "It deepens your understanding and knowledge of your leadership style" (p. 66). Many examples in Chapter IV detail the need for district superintendents to participate in executive coaching as a form of professional development (Lindsey & MacDonell, 2011; Orr, 2007; Petersen et al., 2008). Research shows that a mentor or coach has lasting effects on superintendent longevity and job satisfaction (Harmeier, 2016; Pardini, 2003; Petersen et al., 2008). It

can also be a lifeline during the first days of a district superintendency, as Callan and Levinson stated, "New superintendents who regularly work with coaches are less likely to make serious, job threatening mistakes" (p. 66).

Additionally, in Harmeier's (2016) thesis, her major findings included the need for superintendents to receive executive coaching and mentorship from trusted, experienced coaches who themselves had superintendent experience. This type of support is seen as impactful and valuable to new superintendents because it is customized for their individual needs (Antonucci, 2012). Although the benefits may not be tied directly to student achievement, coaching is linked to increasing the skill sets of school superintendents and helping them achieve their goals (Pardini, 2003).

In this study, district superintendents identified coaching and mentoring as the preferred method for superintendent training and support. One district superintendent stated, "With the huge turnover in administration we are seeing, it is imperative that COEs take the lead in training and providing mentors." Another articulated,

> I believe that individualized mentoring or coaching serves as a best method for
> providing assistance in the area of Superintendent training and support and the
> COE utilizes the COE administrative team, including former and retired
> Superintendents, in their organization to provide this assistance and support.

Although coaching and mentoring are being provided by this COE to their district superintendents, it is clear that it is a needed support to ensure all California's district superintendent job success.

As shown in Table 46, district superintendents indicated that Superintendent Training and Support had a -1.77 mean score in comparison to the COE mean score. This

data is significant when added to the anecdotal data collected in Rounds 3 and 4 in that there is a reluctance to accept COE assistance in this area. This finding is indicative of a lack of confidence in the COE, and in this case, an outside consultant should be considered for use as a mentor or coach.

Conclusion 2

Based on the findings that district superintendents need specialized service and support, it is concluded that COEs need to provide district-specific training and support based on the district superintendent's identified needs. A one-size-fits-all approach to district support is not recommended. The role of COEs in regional education was first established in the early 20th century as an intermediary between state educational agencies and local school districts. Their primary role was one of financial overseer and pass-through for federal and state funding (Hendrick & Ortiz, 1986; Pisapia, 2014). Over time, COEs became a monitoring body for federal and state policies and programs, and then a service provider for districts that could not afford to serve students' educational needs (Pisapia, 2014; Trillingham, 1958). COE responsibilities fall into these general categories, and include but are not limited to the following:

- LCAP review, oversight and alignment.

- Differentiated assistance.

- Education of special populations (special education, court and community school, fostered, homeless and Career Technical Education).

- Credential monitoring and compliance.

- Professional development for district's teachers and administrators.

- Curriculum implementation oversight (CCSESA, 2017; Lewis et al., 2017; Manansala, 2019; Plank et al., 2019; Warren, 2016).

With a large number of oversight areas to cover, the COEs depend on their staff to be able to provide assistance to their districts to ensure compliance, support, and advice. However, as Trillingham (1958) stated, "Our job is to serve the districts, not to run them" (p. 280). Therefore, the support provided to districts and their superintendents is alongside their districts and is not intended to supplant their decision-making or authority.

Although COEs have a large number of programs to implement and support, they do have access to the resources needed to support their district superintendents (Plank et al., 2018). COEs have connections all over the state through professional organizations, personal networks, state and federal agencies, and community organizations. Their knowledge of these resources and ability to bring this information to districts is invaluable. In Round 3 of this survey, one district superintendent articulated that providing state regulation implementation and support, "is crucial. County office brings back the relevant information for our county and assists us in meeting regulations. Having their oversight and support saves a lot of time and headache." In the responses to Round 4, one district superintendent responded,

> We are a relatively small, rural district. Our in-house expertise is often limited to a single person who is the primary source of knowledge in a number of areas. Having a COE and local network of experts is essential to have access to in order to keep the business moving forward while avoiding major mistakes. Having a

COE that digests the overwhelming volume of information and highlighting the key pieces is essential for success.

District superintendents expressed the need for COEs to provide expertise, knowledge and assistance to their districts. However, the determination of which supports were given and how that support would be provided was a concern for the district superintendents. In Table 57, district superintendent responses to Round 4 of the survey were coded to examine the frequency of language that indicated their need for individualized support. There were 26 instances of requests for district-specific support and assistance. In comparison, the COE respondents in Round 4 indicated only once that they would provide individualized support to districts.

In addition to the need for individualized support, the district superintendents expressed that COEs should ask them what types of support they want. One district expert articulated, "Survey districts as to what their focus is, and provide accordingly, in a timely fashion." Yet another responded, "Surveying the local superintendents to identify their needs and using that information to assist in training and support would be helpful." District superintendents want to be asked what, where, when, and how COE support is given. Regularly scheduled surveys to determine need, and follow up surveys to determine if those needs were met are what is required to ensure that district superintendents are getting the support they need for job success.

Conclusion 3

Based on the findings that small district superintendents self-identified as needing increased services from the COE to have job success, it is concluded that COEs should provide an increased amount of specific, targeted, and requested assistance to small

districts. Tekniepe (2015) identified five key factors for determining the success of rural superintendents: political conflict, lack of a strong employment contract, lack of internal staff cohesiveness, external/community pressures, and fiscal stress. Navigating the role of small school district superintendency can also be made more difficult when there are few if any other administrators to lighten the workload. Superintendents function as the CEO of the district. They are the educational and instructional leaders, but also the heads of finance, transportation, policy implementation, maintenance, and operations, in addition to being communicators, supervisors, and policy enactors (ECRA Group, 2010; Kowalski, 2013; Weiss et al., 2014). In small and rural districts, being the head of these varying departments can also include being the only employee.

In this study, Table 3 details the sizes of the districts helmed by responding district superintendents. Of the 17 respondents, 12 were representing either very small (< 1,000 students) or small (1,001-5,000 students) sized school districts. These very small/small district superintendents have their fingers on the pulse of daily operations of their districts, but due to increased responsibilities, they lack the time and availability to attend professional development and state regulatory meetings, and therefore lack access to the vital information that they need to be successful in their many roles. Small district superintendents rely on the COEs to provide the information they need in a timely and multimodal way. In this study, the district superintendents reiterated in multiple surveys this need for information and support. One district expert stated, "Districts, especially small ones, do not have Assist Supts or C&I, for example. We depend on the COEs to deliver the information we need, in a timely fashion." Another responded,

If the county office is providing state level assistance then the only method to ensure effective guidance is to meet regularly. Through those meetings district personnel will be able to stay abreast of critical state level updates and requirements. In addition, for small districts it is impossible for staff to do everything.

A third articulated,

County offices that can get information from the state and bring back and share the most important pieces saves districts an immense amount of time and money. Districts in our sparse, small county do not have the funds nor the time to travel the distances required to learn all that needs to be known. The county office assists and shares this information in a regular and timely fashion and that is so helpful!

The district superintendent's reliance on their COEs to provide the needed information and assistance is crucial to their job success and the success of their districts. Because each district's needs is different based on the expertise of the superintendent and their staff, it is imperative that the COE provide targeted and timely assistance that has been requested by the district. This support should be an increase over what is provided to larger districts, because small district staffing is a prominent factor in the successful implementation of district programs and initiatives.

Conclusion 4

Based on the findings that relationships form the basis for career longevity, it is concluded that COE superintendents must build trusting and lasting relationships with their district counterparts to ensure the success of district superintendents. Building

capacity and social capital in their organization is a vital skill set that district superintendents must possess. By focusing on relationships, the superintendent can avoid missteps during transitions and other challenging circumstances. Kriesky (2018) stated that superintendent longevity is based on relationships in that "long serving superintendents attribute their longevity to specific communication and relationship-building behaviors" (p. 2). In a politically charged landscape, relationships that superintendents build with BOE, district stakeholders, and the community tend to sustain their tenure through difficult times (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). The bank of goodwill needs regular deposits to ensure that when times are tough, the superintendent can work together with others to solve district issues, instead of both parties turning against each other (Williams & Hatch, 2012).

The same concepts that hold true for district superintendents and their staff are applicable to the relationships built between COE superintendents and staff and their district counterparts. In writing about school district superintendents, Kowalski (2005) stated, "Experience arising from the current school reform movement demonstrates that relationship-enhancing communication rather than top-down dicta are necessary for advancing educational agendas" (p. 101). This theory can be extrapolated to include the relationships between county superintendents and district superintendents. District superintendents are asking for individualized service and support that stems from the COE understanding their specific needs. To understand their needs, the COE staff must build strong and lasting relationships with district staff and especially district superintendents. To build those relationships, the COE must communicate frequently and with the purpose of identifying district needs. As one district superintendent

respondent stated, "County offices that do not assume they know what districts need are valuable. The process of asking, offering, supporting, communicating with all districts is essential. Being able/willing to meet the various needs each district has is crucial."

Implications for Action

Through the parallel comparative Delphi process, the data collected was significant in that it indicated the following implications for action:

1. *COE must provide a coach or mentor.* District superintendents should have a COE coach or mentor to help them navigate their first 3 years of superintendency. Whether the county superintendent, a COE supplied coach/mentor from superintendent retirees, or they contract out with an agency, it is imperative that the service be provided at low or no cost to the district. The COE has a vested interest in the success of the county's district superintendents. Given that the turnover rate among district superintendents is not declining, making an upfront investment will undoubtedly pay off for students and staff because most superintendent reform efforts take an average of 5-7 years to come to fruition (Freedberg & Collier, 2016).

2. *COEs must provide district-specific training.* The needs of each district vary depending on many factors including but not limited to fiscal solvency, district size and staffing, location, BOE relations, and a constantly shifting political landscape. This is especially true of small and rural districts. To meet their needs, the COEs should have a menu of services that are either provided by them or are provided by outside consultants to support their districts. Additionally, these services must be provided utilizing varying

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methods such as webinars, in-person meetings, one-on-one meetings, and written communications. The limitations of time, and in some cases, distance require the COEs to be creative in how they provide critical information and support in a timely manner.

3. *COEs should provide a liaison between the COE and each district.* A liaison between the district superintendents and the COE departments would ensure easy access to COE resources and staff. As stated previously, at least one COE representative who responded in Round 3 of the surveys indicated that they provide a liaison for their districts to "facilitate district support built around their identified LCAP goals." This liaison would make certain that the district superintendent is receiving targeted and timely support by connecting them with the appropriate COE departments and staff, state agencies, or other assistance. The liaison would be able to easily align services and service delivery methods that assist the districts in achieving their student performance and programmatic goals.

Recommendations for Further Research

This parallel comparative Delphi study sought to identify and determine the importance of services   provided by the COE to district superintendents, establish the desired service delivery methods and a rationale for choosing those methods, and compare responses from both COE superintendents/designees and district superintendents. The purpose of this research was to determine what the COE should provide to ensure the successful job performance of district superintendents from both perspectives. The following are recommendation proposals for future research.

Recommendation 1

A study should be conducted that researches any links between district superintendent position longevity and their use of a COE liaison who connects them to COE services.

Recommendation 2

A study should be conducted that researches the possibility of a link between district superintendent positional longevity and the use of a COE supplied coach or mentor.

Recommendation 3

A study should be conducted to determine which budget and finance supports from COE contribute to the position longevity of district superintendents.

Closing Remarks and Reflection

I began my research into the services that COEs provide to their districts because I wondered if there was a difference between COEs throughout the state. In my own county, the services provided to our districts were extensive and constantly expanding to meet the needs of the districts they served. I wanted to know if this was true for other counties and districts, and if those services and service delivery methods were meeting their needs.

One of the first documents I came across in my research was a speech given in 1953 by C.C. Trillingham, then the current Office of Education superintendent for Los Angeles County. Included in the audience for his speech were current COE superintendents. He stated,

I'm going to lead with my chin and prophesy that in the next 25 years one of the

great developments in American education will be the emergence of the county or

intermediate unit as a resource agency to make available coordination and

consultative services to all districts in the county, as well as the usual direct

services to the smaller districts (p. 280).

His speech resonated with me in that he was predicting the future of COEs as a resource

and service industry. Through my research, I have concluded that the relationships

between COEs and district superintendents vary depending on the quality, quantity, and

timeliness of the services that are provided. COEs must grow and adapt to the changing

needs of their districts, and district leadership must be willing to ask for and accept COE

services. More importantly, the relationships that are created and maintained by both

groups are critical to the success of the district superintendent.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Description of the Study

STUDY: A mixed methods, parallel comparative Delphi study of the role of County Offices of Education in supporting district superintendent effectiveness.

June 1, 2022

Dear Prospective Study Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study to identify the services that County Offices of Education provide to district superintendents, to rate the effectiveness of those supports, and to identify the best service delivery methods. Furthermore, you will be asked to describe your rationale for choosing those service delivery methods.

The main investigator for this study is Carol Tomeo, Doctoral Candidate at the University of Massachusetts, Global (UMass Global) Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. You were selected to participate in this study because of your expertise as either a County Office of Education superintendent/designee or district superintendent.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this mixed methods, parallel comparative study was to first identify the services provided by the County Office of Education (COE) to district superintendents that ensured their successful job performance from the perspective of both the county superintendents/designees and district superintendents. The second purpose was to rate the importance of the identified services from both perspectives. The third purpose was to identify the best methods of providing those services from both perspectives. Fourth, the student sought the rationale for each method of service delivery. The final purpose was to compare the results from county superintendents/designees to the results from district superintendents to determine the alignment and efficacy of services.

PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate in this study, you will partake in four rounds of electronic surveys via Google Forms. The first-round survey will contain an open-ended question that asks what services your County Office of Education offers. The second round will utilize a Likert scale survey where you will rate the importance of the responses identified in round one. The round three survey will contain an open-ended question asking what the best methods for providing the top five services in survey question two. In the round four survey, you will give your rationale for choosing the service methods in question three. The combined time of all four rounds of surveys is estimated between 15 - 20 minutes. Completion of the electronic survey will take place June through July 2022.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: This study involves minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in everyday life. There is no cost to you for participating, and you will not be compensated in any way for your participation. The survey will be completed anonymously, and the researchers will not know your identity.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: Your participation in this study does not yield any direct benefits to you. However, analysis of the data generated from your participation in this study is intended to provide current information on the services provided by the County Office of Education, and the best methods for providing those services.

ANONYMITY: All surveys and research data collected will be stored securely and confidentially on a password-protected server. Records of information that you provide for the research study, and any personal information you provide, will not be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study. Because you will complete the survey anonymously, your name or other identifying information will not be used in reports or publications. Only the researcher may have access to study records to protect participants' safety and welfare.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding this study, you may contact me at (760) 271-4373 or by email at ctomeo@mail.umassglobal.edu. You can also contact the study's Dissertation Chairperson, Dr. Phil Pendley, by email at pendley@umassglobal.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns about your rights as a research study participant contact Office of the Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618 Telephone (949) 341-7641.

Here is a link to the Screening survey (https://forms.gle/d8TAJLgUKsbzk4m19) to ensure you meet the selection criteria. I will contact you within 48 hours to let you know if you qualify to participate in the study.

Respectfully,

Carol D. Tomeo
Doctoral Candidate, UMass Global

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Materials

Informed Consent Form

INFORMATION ABOUT: A mixed methods, parallel comparative Delphi study of the role of County Offices of Education in supporting district superintendent effectiveness.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Carol D. Tomeo, Doctoral Candidate

PURPOSE OF STUDY: This study is being conducted for a dissertation for the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program at the University of Massachusetts Global (UMass Global). The purpose of this mixed methods, parallel comparative study was to first identify the services provided by the County Office of Education (COE) to district superintendents that ensured their successful job performance from the perspective of both the county superintendents/designees and district superintendents. The second purpose was to rate the importance of the identified services from both perspectives. The third purpose was to identify the best methods of providing those services from both perspectives. Fourth, the student sought the rationale for each method of service delivery. The final purpose was to compare the results from county superintendents/designees to the results from district superintendents to determine the alignment and efficacy of services.

In participating in this research study, I agree to partake in four rounds of electronic surveys via Google Forms. The first-round survey will contain an open-ended question that asks what services your County Office of Education offers. The second round will utilize a Likert scale survey where you will rate the importance of the responses identified in round one. The round three survey will contain an open-ended question asking what the best methods for providing the top five services in survey question two. In the round four survey, you will give your rationale for choosing the service methods in question three. The combined time of all four rounds of surveys is estimated between 15 - 20 minutes. Completion of the electronic survey will take place June through July 2022.

I understand that:
a) No known major risks or discomforts are associated with this research. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping all participant information, survey responses, and emails confidential and stored on a password-protected server.

b) I am aware that my participation in this study is voluntary, and I will not be compensated for my participation in this study. I may decide to not participate in this study and can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions on the survey if I choose.

c) The information including the findings and recommendations generated from my participation will help to add to the body of literature associated with services that the County Office of Education provides to district superintendents. The findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.

d) Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Carol D. Tomeo, UMass Global Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Ms. Tomeo may be contacted by phone at (760) 271-4372 or by email at

ctomeo@mail.umassglobal.edu. The dissertation chairperson may also answer questions: Dr. Phil Pendley at pendley@umassglobal.edu.

e) I understand that I may refuse to participate in, or I may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time. I also understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed, and my consent obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618 Telephone (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research participant's Bill of Rights. I have read the above and understand it and hereby voluntarily consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Doctoral Candidate   Date

APPENDIX C

Participant's Bill of Rights

UMASS GLOBAL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.

2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.

3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.

4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.

5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.

6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.

7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.

8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the UMASS GLOBAL Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The UMass Global Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMASS GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

UMass Global IRB   Adopted   2021

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APPENDIX D

Eligibility Screening Survey

Eligibility Screening Survey

This brief survey is intended to determine your eligibility to participate in a doctoral study about the services and service methods provided by County Offices of education from the viewpoints of county superintendents/designees, and district superintendents.

* Required

1. Please provide your name and title below.

   _____

2. In which county do you work?

   _____

3. In which district do you work? (If you work in a County Office of Education, please type, "N/A".)

   _____

4. Are you currently serving as a county superintendent/designee or district superintendent? *

   Mark only one oval.

   ( ) Yes, I am currently serving as a county superintendent/designee.

   ( ) Yes, I am currently serving as a district superintendent.

   ( ) No, I am not currently serving as a county superintendent/designee or district superintendent.

5. Have you been serving in your position for at least three years? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Yes

    ◯ No

6. Are you willing to participate in four survey rounds that will take you approximately 15 - 20 minutes in total to   *
    complete?

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Yes

    ◯ No

APPENDIX E

Round 1 Surveys

Round 1 Survey: County Superintendents/Designees

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this doctoral Delphi study. This is the first of four rounds of survey questions. In this round, you will answer the question below in any way you choose. However, a simple list is more than enough information. You do not need to give a rationale or explain any of your responses.

* Required

1. What services do you identify as important for COEs to provide for district superintendents in your county to   *
    ensure their successful job performance?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

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Google Forms

Round 1 Survey: District Superintendents

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this doctoral Delphi study. This is the first of four rounds of survey questions. In this round, you will answer the question below in any way you choose. However, a simple list is more than enough information. You do not need to give a rationale or explain any of your responses.

* Required

1. What services do you identify as important for County Offices of Education to provide for you to ensure your   *
    successful job performance?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

APPENDIX F

Round 2 Surveys

Round 2 Survey: District Superintendents

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this doctoral Delphi study. This is the second of four rounds of survey questions, and should take you 3 - 5 minutes to complete. In this round, you will determine the level of importance of the services provided to you utilizing a Likert Scale.

* Required

1. In terms of importance, how do you rank _____ as a County Office of Education service provided to you? *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

2. In terms of importance, how do you rank _____ as a County Office of Education service provided to you? *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

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3. In terms of importance, how do you rank _____ as a County Office of Education service provided to you? *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

4. In terms of importance, how do you rank _____ as a County Office of Education service provided to you? *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

5. In terms of importance, how do you rank _____ as a County Office of Education service provided to you? *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

Round 2 Survey: County Superintendents/Designees

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this doctoral Delphi study. This is the second of four rounds of survey questions, and should take you 3 - 5 minutes to complete. In this round, you will determine the level of importance of the services provided to District Superintendents utilizing a Likert Scale.

* Required

1. In terms of importance, how do you rank _____ as a service provided to district superintendents? *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	○	○	○	○	○	Very important

2. In terms of importance, how do you rank _____ as a service provided to district superintendents? *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	○	○	○	○	○	Very important

3. In terms of importance, how do you rank _____ as a service provided to district superintendents? *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

4. In terms of importance, how do you rank _____ as a service provided to district superintendents? *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

5. In terms of importance, how do you rank _____ as a service provided to district superintendents? *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

APPENDIX G

Round 3 Surveys

Round 3 Survey: County Superintendents/Designees

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this doctoral Delphi study. This is the third of four rounds of survey questions, and should take approximately 3 minutes to complete. In this round, you will answer the question below in any way you choose. However, a simple list is more than enough information. You do not need to give a rationale or explain any of your responses.

1. How do you describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services (__, __, __, __, and __) from Research Question 2?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Google Forms

Round 3 Survey: District Superintendents

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this doctoral Delphi study. This is the third of four rounds of survey questions, and should take approximately 3 minutes to complete. In this round, you will answer the question below in any way you choose. However, a simple list is more than enough information. You do not need to give a rationale or explain any of your responses.

1. How do you describe the best methods for providing the top five rated services (__, __, __, __, and __) from Research Question 2?

APPENDIX H

Round 4 Surveys

Round 4 Survey: County Superintendents/Designees

This is the final round survey question and should take you 3 - 5 minutes to complete. In this round, you will provide your rationale for each of the service methods chosen in Round 3. Thank you, again, for agreeing to participate in this doctoral Delphi study.

* Required

1. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of _____ for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 3 (___, ___, ___, ___, and ___)?   *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of _____ for providing the top five rated services from Research Question 3 (___, ___, ___, ___, and ___)?   *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of _____ for providing the top five rated *
    services from Research Question 3 (___, ___, ___, ___, and ___)?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

4. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of _____ for providing the top five rated *
    services from Research Question 3 (___, ___, ___, ___, and ___)?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

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5. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of _____ for providing the top five rated   *
   services from Research Question 3 (___, ___, ___, ___, and ___)?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Round 4 Survey: District Superintendents

This is the final round survey question and should take you 3 - 5 minutes to complete. In this round, you will provide your rationale for each of the service methods chosen in Round 3. Thank you, again, for agreeing to participate in this doctoral Delphi study.

* Required

1. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of _____ for providing the top five rated   *
    services from Research Question 3 (___, ___, ___, ___, and ___)?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

2. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of _____ for providing the top five rated   *
    services from Research Question 3 (___, ___, ___, ___, and ___)?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

3. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of _____ for providing the top five rated   *
    services from Research Question 3 (___, ___, ___, ___, and ___)?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

4. How do you describe your rationale for selecting the method of _____ for providing the top five rated   *
    services from Research Question 3 (___, ___, ___, ___, and ___)?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

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