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Student Perceptions of the Effects of the Modern Educational Reform Movement on the Concept of the Whole Child

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Edward Theodore Knight

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my children MacKenzi and Max and my grandson, Kei, as I have constantly tried to make the world a better place for their future through improving public education. I watched my own children often struggle through what school had become during the years of reform, and too many times heard them talk about just "playing the game." They both love learning but have grappled with what school has become. Both of my children performed well for teachers who focused on relationships and made learning relevant. Similarly, they struggled with those who were burnt out, taught to the test, or failed to change. Although I believe I made some positive changes to the field as a teacher, school administrator, and most recently as a central office administrator, I am eager to use my new role as superintendent to create a school district that I would be proud to have my grandson attend: a school district that focuses on the whole child and truly educates students for the future that they will inherit.

Acknowledgments

This journey has been one of the most difficult and most satisfying aspects of my professional life. I have many people who I want to thank, starting with my loving wife, Amanda. She has always been by my side, pushing me when I needed to be pushed and pulling me away from the process when I needed a break. She is my biggest fan and the reason for my personal and professional success. I want to thank my other family members for their love and support. I also want to thank Dr. Andrew Lumpe for his continued guidance and support through this process; I couldn't have asked for a better dissertation chair and mentor. I want to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Julie A McElhany and Dr. Mark Weatherly, for their dedication to education and their support in this process. I appreciate all of the work and guidance from the faculty at Abilene Christian University; I learned so much from each of them. I also want to thank my professional colleagues who cheered me on during this process and kept me seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, especially Dr. Steven Cook, who reminded me that the best dissertation is a finished one.

Abstract

As a robust public education system is critical to the future of the U.S. democracy, efforts to improve or reform education have been prominent since its inception. Unfortunately, recent strategies to improve academic achievement have not been successful, and unintended consequences were noted for both students and staff. A specific issue related to modern reform was the construct that the focus on the whole child was disappearing as educators focused solely on the cognitive aspects of their students. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of recently graduated high school students in an effort to determine if the modern educational reform movement had negatively altered classroom conditions in terms of the concepts of the whole child. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's whole child framework was modified to a student-facing questionnaire. This survey, along with the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale and the demographic questions of gender and postsecondary status, were delivered to recent high school graduates. The quantitative study consisted of 103 respondents who answered all of the questions from the survey. The Whole Child Student Survey was determined valid and reliable, and there was a significant correlation between the tenets of the whole child and the tenets of the self-determination theory of motivation. Significant differences were found in the perceptions of students who were in a two- or four-year college with those who were in a trade school, the military, or the workforce. Evidence was found for the connection between a student's autonomy, their intrinsic motivation, student engagement, and academic achievement.

Keywords: intrinsic motivation, whole child, self-determination, student perceptions

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Although the purpose of schooling is constantly transforming, one consistent belief is that it is the definitive path toward individual and U.S. prosperity (Spring, 2016). Urban and Wagoner (2009) described the founding fathers' beliefs that an educated citizenry, and not just the wealthy, was the only way to preserve freedom within a democracy. The common school, a free school, paid for with local taxes and governed locally, was available to all white students and was the first iteration of the vision for a free and appropriate public American education (Mondale & Patton, 2001). At the time of common schools, public education was a way to meet the goals of less crime, decreased poverty, character education, and a healthy and just society (Spring, 2016.). As the country's economic, social, and political needs evolved, so did the role of public education (Lonsbury & Apple, 2012; Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001).

Education is uniquely situated to be a primary driver for societal change and has been continually altered since its inception to help bring about these changes (Ingersoll & Collins, 2017; Urban & Wagoner, 2009). American society began to change at the turn of the century as citizens started to move to cities, immigration increased, and more people began to work for corporations (Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001). This shift brought about societal, political, and economic reform within education, termed the progressive movement, which focused on efficiency that could meet the needs of the industrial era (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). More recent education reforms attempted to meet societal demands by focusing on federalization and centralization while increasing competition and accountability (Heise, 2017; Young, 2018). Cold War implications (Topolovčan & Dubovicki, 2019) and equality considerations (Nelson, 2016) have continued to lead members of society to believe that modern education continues to need reform.

The specific context for this study is the last 20 years of education reform, beginning with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) initiative, which increased accountability for schools and districts through a system of rewards and sanctions based on students' academic progress (Dee & Jacob, 2010).

Background

While reform is a mainstay of American public education, the educational landscape changed considerably with the first passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 (Casalaspi, 2017). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act authors designed the legislation to allocate federal dollars to education to support economically disadvantaged students, specifically working to improve dropout rates, increase college matriculation rates, and increase employment opportunities for all (Casalaspi, 2017; Nelson, 2016). The authors of this act intended to further bring the federal government into local education, often strongly influencing state and local education policies and ushered in a new focus on equity in education (Nelson, 2016). The federal government's interest in education continued with the *A Nation at Risk* report in the early 1980s, sounding an alarm about education's role in our country's prosperity (McIntush, 2000). This report, commissioned by President Reagan, concluded that America's schools were failing and should be reformed immediately through free-market practices (McIntush, 2000).

Unprecedented education reform occurred over the last 20 years as the federal government further exerted power and influence over public education (Heise, 2017). The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, ushered in an increased level of accountability with standards, testing, and ultimately pressure on educators (Dee & Jacob, 2010). The goal of this reauthorization was for

schools to have 100% of students in grades 3–8 and high school pass standardized tests in reading and mathematics. Schools and districts that did not meet this goal faced strict improvement strategies, including reconstitution. This goal was never met and came with several unintended curricular, instructional, affective, and teacher morale consequences (McNeal, 2012). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was reauthorized nearly a decade and a half later, this time as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This attempt to reform education was expected to fix many ills within NCLB by giving more flexibility back to the states (Fusarelli & Ayscue, 2019). Nearly five years into the new legislation, little changed as the fundamental aspects of prior reforms stayed consistent and standardized state test scores are still prominent in schools (Saultz et al., 2019).

In addition to federal legislation, there are other initiatives that apply pressure to education through various reform strategies. The federal government used its financial influence as a means for reform with the Race to the Top (RttT) grants in 2009 as part of President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA; Fischel, 2010). Funds were distributed to states that executed plans to reform education, including implementing standards-based instruction and their accompanying assessments, as well as creative ways to reward teachers and leaders who showed improvement in the data generated from those assessments (Barnes, 2011). In an effort to centralize the curricular aspects of education, the Council of Chief State School Officers, in conjunction with the National Governors Association, came together to design standards common to all states (Wallender, 2014). A majority of states adopted these Common Core standards starting in 2010 and followed by the accompanying assessments to demonstrate growth and proficiency, making them eligible for Race to the Top dollars (Deas, 2018). A recent initiative to reform education is the Program for International Student

Assessment (PISA) from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which added global competition to the current slate of data (Rutkowski, 2015). Lawmakers and politicians used international test scores in math and science to sound the alarm that America is falling behind other countries due to the lack of educational competitiveness (West, 2012). These examples of the modern reform movement continue to characterize education reform through accountability and continue to be authored with limited influence from those who are most affected.

Statement of the Problem

Although the modern education reform movement continues to evolve, adequate progress in meeting the original goal of improving student outcomes for all children remains lacking (Ellsworth et al., 2011; Lonsbury & Apple, 2012). In addition to the evidence that demonstrates failed reform initiatives, numerous unintended consequences such as narrowing of the curriculum and a loss of attention to the affective side of students occurred (Grinell & Rabin, 2013; Levine & Levine, 2012).

Researchers created a conceptual framework through teachers' perceptions, which included decreased attention to the whole child through a narrowing of the curriculum and a lack of student creativity (Dee & Jacob, 2010; Grinell & Rabin, 2013; Hutchings, 2017). The original intention of the American education system has not changed, and neither has the need for increased security and equity (Klein et al., 2012). Therefore, reform efforts must continue; however, there is little belief that reformers will achieve this goal if future leaders do not consider the perceptions and beliefs of the very students their ideas propose to improve (Elwood, 2013).

When determining why various reform strategies have not improved test scores in the way leaders had hoped, researchers can examine student learning. Student learning is defined as the ability to transfer knowledge and skills; without the ability to transfer, learning most likely did not occur (Driscoll, 2014). For students to learn or transfer knowledge and skill, they must engage and genuinely invest in the classroom. This is best accomplished when students have a relationship with their teacher (Archambault et al., 2017). Student-teacher relationships are based on how much investment students have in their teacher and their classroom. The founders of self-determination theory explained that students would make this investment decision based on their level of autonomy, self-efficacy, and their experience with the teacher and the school (McHugh et al., 2013). However, student voice and student autonomy are suffering due to the current reform era (Goodman & Eren, 2013), students' self-efficacy is questioned due to constant assessments of their ability (Loh, 2019), and teachers affect, as well as school climates, are suffering due to high-stakes accountability (von der Embse et al., 2016). Granger (2008) summarized these issues in exclaiming that current researchers support the claim that the No Child Left Behind reform era and its accountability for staff and students created a negative culture for student-teacher relationships, practices in classrooms, and teacher efficacy. As a result of these conditions, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2007) commissioned a group of leaders to reimagine how education could truly meet its mission. The work of this commission developed the concept of the whole child and suggested that education focuses on the areas of health, safety, engagement, support, and challenge to help students fully develop and be prepared for the 21st century (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development [ASCD], 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental, comparative, and correlational study was to examine the perceptions of recently graduated public school students in a suburban school district regarding the conditions of their educational experience within the context of the modern reform movement.

Research Questions

RQ1. What is the validity and reliability of the Whole Child Student Survey?

RQ2. Do recently graduated students, who were educated during the accountability movement, believe that certain aspects of the whole child (i.e., engagement, support, and challenge) were absent during their high school experience?

RQ3. Do recently graduated students, who were educated during the accountability movement, believe that certain aspects of the self-determination theory of motivation (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) were absent during their high school experience?

RQ4. Is there a correlation between whole child tenets and self-determination theory of motivation tenets?

RQ5. Is there a gender difference in students' whole child high school experiences?

RQ6. Is there a postsecondary status difference in students' whole child high school experiences?

Definition of Key Terms

Accountability. The movement aimed at consequences for the perceived lack of focus on student achievement in many schools and districts (Dee & Jacob, 2010).

Education reform. The demand for better student outcomes (Young, 2018).

Federalization. The push for education policy to be regulated at the federal level (Heise, 2017).

Free market practices. The ideology that schools should be run like a business with a cost or benefit analysis to decisions (McIntush, 2000).

Political needs. The teaching of government, community, and citizenry to increase awareness of patriotism, voting, and electability (Spring, 2016).

Social needs. The teaching of morals and character as well as health and wellness to create better communities and lesson wrongdoing (Spring, 2016).

Whole child. The educational focus on the affective and physical components of learning in addition to cognition (Slade & Griffith, 2013).

Chapter Summary

Education continues to be thought of as the best hope for both security and equity within the United States. The constant critiques, whether political, social, or economic, continue to drive education toward reform to improve outcomes for all students who can compete on a global scale. Teachers continue to decry the current reform methods, and legislators are slow to adapt to their concerns. Central to the improvement of education, students have distinct expectations of their experience, and reformers have been reluctant to seek out this information. In the following chapters, I will review the literature on this topic and provide the methodology and results of the study on the beliefs and assumptions of students who have been educated during the most recent period of education reform.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Due to its impact on the ability of our nation to prosper, education continues to be at the forefront of political, societal, and economic conversations. Education has a cycle of change, and the pendulum continues to move back and forth as political, social, and economic factors change. Former reform efforts have often been seen as a short-term success just to be criticized as time passes. As this cycle is likely to continue, and education will surely continue to be at the forefront of conversations around America's success, it is imperative that education finally meets its goals of social justice and economic security for all. In order for education to finally meet the demands of a global society, it is imperative that politicians and decision makers understand and implement policies consistent with motivation science. Furthermore, all stakeholders must insist that the voice of the students who have been impacted by education are elevated and listened to by the next generation of politicians, leaders, and decision makers.

Literature Search Methods

The search process for this literature review was conducted primarily using the OneSearch feature on Abilene Christian University's (ACU) library resource page. I used various keywords to search for peer-reviewed articles that were predominantly written in the last 10 years. Keyword combinations for the reform history part of the literature review comprised of phrases such as *education reform*, *history of education*, and *history of education reform*. Much of the research on the history of education came from textbooks and other print sources, as the number of journal articles on the topic were sparse. Keyword searches for the implications of the reform movement were general in nature; however, I used specific keywords for specific reform movements such as *No Child Left Behind* and *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. Keyword searches for the theoretical framework portion of the literature review started with *self-*

determination theory in general and progressed to searches such as *autonomy and engagement* or *competence and motivation*. The ACU OneSearch platform was very useful and helpful in this endeavor.

Literature Review

Purpose of American Public Education

In general, education is seen as the purposeful dissemination of ideas within a given society (Radu, 2014). The aim of the dissemination of ideas is most often seen as the furtherance of the common good (Spring, 2016). The role of American public education in furthering the common good lies in the social, economic, and political goals that are instilled within the education system (Merry, 2009). Freedom, equality, and association, regardless of race, social class, or other differences, are seminal goals that are believed to be attained when the public is highly educated (Iaocb & Groza, 2019). These basic goals have not changed over the course of the nation's history, though the ways in which they have shaped the country have (Mondale & Patton, 2001).

The American education system has evolved throughout history, continually changing to meet the demands of various social, political, and economic forces (Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001). As a new country, America needed a means for securing its independence, and several leaders, including Thomas Jefferson, knew that an educated society would be needed for America to flourish (Iaocb & Groza, 2019: Urban & Wagoner, 2009). Other leaders, such as Benjamin Franklin, believed a system of learning was needed to afford citizens the ability to learn useful skills to serve God, country, family, and friends (Scotchmer, 1984). Over 200 years later, President Bill Clinton spoke about the important role of education in the economy, communities, and the nation (Carpenter, 2005). America has changed in several ways through

the years, the goals of education have continued to stay the same, and the economic, political, and social forces that create change continue to evolve (Spring, 2016).

Political Goals of Education. The current political goals of education, including informed voting, service to the community, and following the law, were part of the founding fathers' platform over two and a half centuries ago (Spring, 2016). The founding fathers believed that the only way to preserve the current democracy and stop tyranny was to educate all citizens so that they were able to actively participate in all political functions of the new republic (Iaocb & Groza, 2019; Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001). Germane to the nation's political goals was the concept of self-rule and local control in which citizens had an opportunity to learn and practice national values at the local educational level (Mondale & Patton, 2001). Values such as what kind of schooling, for who, and who pays for it became entangled in the politics of the time and were argued at the local and national levels (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). As education is charged with disseminating ideas, and this control is a means of power, various groups at the local and national levels have stayed engaged in the politics of education as a means of controlling the narrative around the history and direction of the nation (Radu, 2014).

Social Goals of Education. The social goals of education, which focus on moral character, have also stayed fairly consistent since the inception of American education (Spring, 2016). The basis of morality in early American education came from religious teachings and quickly moved toward a nonsectarian view of patriotism and civic virtues (Mondale & Patton, 2001; Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001). The teaching of virtues through character education became commonplace in education, with leaders such as Thomas Jefferson exclaiming that morals must teach others to do what is right (Scotchmer, 1984). Subsequent leaders continued pushing for the social goals of education, with numerous presidents citing that the character of

citizens was of the utmost importance and a foundational aim of the education system (Carpenter, 2005).

Economic Goals of Education. The economic goals of education have similarly stayed consistent over the years with the understanding that a thriving public education system is the greatest means to achieve upward mobility and gain the knowledge and skills needed to secure a positive economic future (Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001). Economically, education is seen as an equalizer for those living in poverty with the belief that educating those with fewer means will increase individual wealth and, ultimately, the wealth and well-being of the country (Scotchmer, 1984). This concept of human capital theory states that investments in education will ultimately reap the rewards on a grander scale and allow workers to compete on a global scale (Spring, 2016). This foundational belief continues to be supported by leaders with a clear shift in language toward expressing economic indicators as instrumental to the purpose of American education (Carpenter, 2005).

Common School Reform Movement

The common school movement, established in the early 1800s, is seen as the first major reform of education as citizens believed that a universal schooling system would be needed for all to flourish in a newly established nation (Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001). Common schools were developed out of a social need to improve educational access for children who did not come from wealthy families, an economic need to ensure success in a changing economy, and a political need to provide more educated citizens to participate in and protect American democracy (Mondale & Patton, 2001). At that time, this form of education was widely supported by politicians from all parties (Groen, 2008). Many leaders believed that the common school

framework would ultimately eliminate differences in social class, creating a more equitable

society with more responsible and productive citizens (Fife, 2016; Spring, 2016).

Based on the concept of improving society, common schools were universally free and

locally governed education institutions that had limited federal or state oversight (Groen, 2008).

Although common schools were free to families, they were supported by local taxes and

generally only allowed white students to attend (Mondale & Patton, 2001). Common schools

focused on younger students in primary education with an emphasis on local, centralized

decision-making (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). Common school reform was also defined by a

disciplined approach to hard work, competition, and punctuality, dispositions that many felt

would be important to a future more dictated by a market economy (Parkerson & Parkerson,

2001).

Although common schools, and the belief that improving morality would change society,

became the accepted avenue of public education, there were critiques of the movement that

ultimately led to new reform efforts (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). A major issue with the aims of

the common school movement, a child's home life, and current social station failed to be

overcome and gave education reformers a talking point against the concept (Spring, 2016).

Although common schools attempted to ensure more equality and improve humanity, education

was still plagued by racism, sexism, and ultimately the concept of education as public policy

increased political forces (Mondale & Patton, 2001). Higher taxes with a loss of local control

were one such political struggle as was the public denouncing of slavery by prominent common

school champion and politician Horace Mann (Groen, 2008).

At the turn of the century, the common school continued to be the prominent means of

education in many parts of the country, but as more people moved to urban centers, this mode of

education came under scrutiny (Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001). Additionally, as a new economy became more complex, a more comprehensive school system was needed (Mondale & Patton, 2001). The common school had other shortcomings as well, namely that the school most often failed to overcome the student's deficient home life (Spring, 2016). The concept of commonality that was once seen as the means to improve the lives of all citizens was ultimately used as a reason against it (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). Therefore, progressives ushered in a new demand against uniformity, which aimed to move education to a more child-centered approach with a moral imperative (Reese, 2001).

Progressive School Reform Movement

The progressive school movement began in the late 1800s and the early 1900s and ushered in many changes seen as improvements that were needed due to changes within the modernization of the country and the enlightenment of various scholars (Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001). The progressive reform movement had many of the same aims as the common school movement, including teaching morality, increasing equity, and giving students a means to improve their social and economic status (Iaocb & Groza, 2019). Although the goals of education remained the same, the means changed with the major tenet of the progressive movement moving toward a more child-centered education system, focused on individuality and practicality (Radu, 2014). Two basic wings of the progressive movement emerged from this reform effort, the administrative progressives who focused on structures like centralized support and government control and the pedagogical progressives who focused on classroom conditions (Wraga, 2019). As the progressive movement focused on individual students and their strengths, students needed to be taught and treated differently, and this way of thinking ultimately led to aspects of ability grouping and tracking into vocational programs (Mondale & Patton, 2001;

Spring, 2016). As the progressive school movement continued to evolve, specialization became commonplace, with most schools moving to a graded mentality with kindergarten classrooms and high schools joining the traditional first- through eighth-grade structure of the common school (Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001; Urban & Wagoner, 2009).

Although the progressive reform movement utilized different means to meet the goals of the American education system, the movement would meet the same fate as its predecessor, with the general public raising dissatisfaction over a lack of student effort, lower standards, and ultimately limited achievement (Mondale & Patton, 2001). Toward the middle of the 20th century, it was apparent that the structural reform efforts of the administrative progressives had gained traction while the progressive pedagogical initiatives were blamed for failure (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). This failure was, in part, attributed to the ideology of focusing on individual students while naively ignoring the social and political constructs of the world that these students would inherit (Weiler, 2004). Furthermore, progressivism was seen as anti-intellectual, with the results being students who did not attain the knowledge and skills to further their station in American democracy or compete on a global level (Radu, 2014).

Modern Educational Reform Movement

The modern reform movement can be traced back to the mid 20th century when, again, political, social, and economic impacts were realized through national security, civil rights, and economic concerns (Johanningmeier, 2010; Topolovčan & Dubovicki, 2019). Scholars generally characterize the modern reform movement by a greater degree of accountability for states, school districts, schools, and teachers (Hutchings, 2017). A cornerstone of this accountability movement is a higher degree of direction from the federal government as politicians aim to increase federal oversight of the locally controlled education systems (Heise, 2017). Additionally, centralizing

standards and assessments and using resources as a motivator toward centralization has become a foundational strategy of the federal government (Young, 2018). A final component of the modern reform movement lies in the market-based approach of running education like a business with competition being at the heart of improvement (Ellison, 2012).

National Defense Education Act of 1958. The National Defense Act of 1958 (NDEA) was signed into law on September 2, 1958, as an emergency bill by President Dwight Eisenhower as a result of the Soviet Union launching Sputnik a year earlier (Harris & Miller, 2005). The concern over the Soviet Union possibly surpassing America in terms of education created not only a national concern but an in-depth examination of the education system as a whole (Flemming, 1960). The federal government was quick to blame the public education system for a perceived lack of international competitiveness, and this blame resonated, as many were disillusioned with the progressive movement of the past several decades (Kessinger, 2011). The Soviet Union beating the United States into space gave credibility to those who had been disappointed with the progressive mode of education and, specifically, its perceived lack of standards and essential traditions (Johanningmeier, 2010; Kessinger, 2011).

The National Defense Education Act's primary function was to introduce additional federal funding into the education system emphasizing math, science, engineering, and foreign language (Jolly, 2009). The NDEA provided monies for students who wanted and were able to pursue studies in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects and to advance careers in areas that were defense-oriented (Harris & Miller, 2005). Through various title programs, the federal government shelled out over a billion dollars; monies were earmarked to increase university teachers' knowledge and increase instruction in public schools (Flemming,

1960). Furthermore, monies were put into testing and counseling to find gifted students as well as student loans for those students to attend college (Kessinger, 2011).

      Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Following the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958, the federal government continued its march toward more involvement in education with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965 (McGuinn, 2015). Signed into law by then-president Lyndon B. Johnson, the act aimed to improve the equality of the education system by infusing federal money into school districts with disadvantaged students (Nelson, 2016). Although a product of the public education system himself, President Johnson used a familiar tactic of pointing to flaws of schooling to make the case that education should be America's number one priority, as it was the best means to move children out of poverty (Casalaspi, 2017). This federal foray into a state rights and local control issue could become political; therefore, the act made several statements about limiting interference with the traditional local control of schools (Greer, 2018).

      With the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the federal government dispersed 1.3 billion dollars through various title programs in its war on poverty (Greer, 2018). One billion dollars of that money went directly to Title 1 programs that attempted to equalize funding with wealthy school districts (Casalaspi, 2017). The additional monies were allocated to additional title priorities, including libraries, materials, educational research, and state departments of education (Nelson, 2016). Due, in part, to the federal governments worry of being perceived as overreaching, the initial authorization of the ESEA lacked compliance measures that would hold state and local education agencies accountable, leading to questions about the act's ability to effectively close gaps for students of poverty (McGuinn, 2015).

A Nation at Risk Report. Following the national security debates of the NDEA and the poverty claims stemming from the ESEA, there continued to be a widespread conversation as to the quality of the American education system (Johanningmeier, 2010). This conversation encouraged President Ronald Reagan and Secretary of Education Terrel Bell to create a commission on the current quality of the education system (Hunt & Staton, 1996). The commission published the *A Nation at Risk* report in 1983 to publicly define issues that were apparent in the American system of public education and suggest solutions for the identified problems (Good, 2010). The general tone of the report was that there were reasons for concern within the education system and that mediocrity had set in (Mehta, 2015). The *A Nation at Risk* report was immediately published throughout the country, with the message that American schools were in dire need of reform (McIntush, 2000).

The *A Nation at Risk* report cited several issues with the current state of education and noted that many of the gains that were noticed following the launch of Sputnik had deteriorated (Johanningmeier, 2010). The report noted that American test scores were failing compared to international comparisons and that Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores were also declining (Mehta, 2015). Concepts such as content expectations, time, and the quality of teaching were all noted as reasons for this decline (Hunt & Staton, 1996). The results of this failing education system were said to be a deterioration of the United States as a leader in science and technology, innovation, and commerce (Good, 2010). The report, which was billed as a transparent letter to the people of the United States, ultimately concluded that schools were in crisis and that reform was needed to improve America's standing in the world (McIntush, 2000).

No Child Left Behind Act. Following the *A Nation at Risk* report, several reform initiatives were attempted but none as extreme as the reauthorization of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act in 2002, termed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; Shoffner, 2016). As seen in prior times, there were numerous claims of failing schools and demands for reforms based on a lack of accountability for public schools (Levine & Levine, 2012). To answer these calls, the No Child Left Behind Act set out to measure schools through yearly testing and hold accountable those schools that failed to make adequate progress (McNeal, 2012). Politicians believed that by measuring students and publishing their scores to the public, with the threat of negative consequences for failure, that schools would improve (Dee & Jacob, 2010).

The specific reform initiatives under NCLB included state-adopted accountability systems that include standards and assessments to measure adequate yearly progress (Dee & Jacob, 2010), and schools hiring a highly qualified teacher for every classroom (Granger, 2008). The foundation of the No Child Left Behind Act was a series of high-stakes, yearly assessments in reading and math and occasional assessments in science that would ultimately lead to all students being proficient by 2014 (Ametepee et al., 2014). A major accountability measure of the NCLB legislation was instituted if schools failed to make adequate yearly progress and entailed a sequence of corrective actions from school plans to reconstitution, which could include replacing staff or reorganizing as a charter school (McNeal, 2012). Although No Child Left Behind was initially seen as a success due to its bipartisan approach and lofty aims, it ultimately failed to reach its goals and, similar to its predecessors, needed reform (Shoffner, 2016).

Race to the Top. The American and Recovery Investment Act of 2009 provided $100 billion for education; within this act, $4.35 billion was earmarked for the Race to the Top (RttT) program, which was meant to improve student outcomes (Dragoset et al., 2016). Rather than reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, this program was meant to incentivize various federal programs at the state level through voluntary competitions (Howell &

Magazinnik, 2017). These competitions, enacted through federal grant programs, gave states money if they implemented reform efforts that were innovative or based on specific reform principles (Barnes, 2011). President Obama, lacking some of the more traditional means to effect education policy, chose to use money as a motivator for states reeling from the great recession, and a majority of states chose to implement reform and innovation practices in exchange for a share of the multibillion dollar grant program (Howell, 2015).

Within the Race to the Top grant program, many requirements were employed to make sure that the states who received the money were implementing the practices the federal government thought would most effectively impact student learning (Barnes, 2011). There were several major categories for which states could apply for a share of the RttT grants, including improving standards and assessments, increasing their ability to use data, and turning around low-performing schools (Howell & Magazinnik, 2017). Within the grant program, many states were awarded dollars for increasing the preverbal bar that students needed to reach in terms of proficiency (Weiss & Hess, 2015). One of the more controversial aspects of RttT was that grant dollars were awarded for states that implemented teacher and principal evaluation reforms (Dragoset et al., 2016). It was apparent that the allure of money, especially in the face of a recession, was an appropriate carrot for many states as several adopted the various reform ideas eligible for grant money; and to this day, many of the reforms implemented continue to be part of state-level reforms (Howell, 2015).

Common Core Adoptions. In the spring of 2009, the National Governors Association, joined by the Council of Chief State School Officers, met to discuss education and start the groundwork for a set of unified standards across America's public schools (Deas, 2018). The goal of this project was to collaboratively develop a set of standards for math and language arts

that would set the standard for being college or career ready (Wallender, 2014). Although national standards would appear to have universal support, many argued that the project would be an intrusion of local control over education and another attempt at the centralization of education (Neem, 2018). Because the federal government could not dictate state-level curriculum, the Race to the Top grant program included adopting standards such as the Common Core in their criteria (Kelly, 2017). As part of the Race to the Top program, two vendors were also awarded grants to create common assessments that would assess students in the new standards (Jochim & McGuinn, 2016). Although some states continue to implement Common Core standards and assessments, while others have transitioned to other standard and assessment measures, the one consistent is that states are constantly working to increase their test scores to compete at an international level (Ferguson, 2017).

Program for International Student Assessment. The modern educational reform movement has increasingly been focused on international comparisons, namely the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which was developed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to improve the global economy (Rutkowski, 2015). The PISA test has created an environment for various countries to all look at and demonstrate international competitiveness through increased test scores in reading as well as math and science (Volante, 2015). The consequences of an international comparative exam have been felt across the globe, with several countries and their constituents panicking at the lower scores and expanding their reform efforts (Pons, 2017; Sellar & Lingard, 2014). However, many countries, including the United States, believe that the work of the OECD and the PISA exam itself are just the next iterations of a constantly evolving reform movement centered on testing (Niemann et al., 2017). With the various critiques of the PISA exam, there is still research that

points to the need for international comparisons both in terms of economic prosperity and the moral obligation of the education system (West, 2012).

Every Student Succeeds Act. After more than a decade of the No Child Left Behind Act, and various other smaller reform efforts, President Barack Obama signed the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in December of 2015, and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) became the educational law of the land (Adler-Greene, 2019). The Every Student Succeeds Act was named after two bills of the House and Senate that were finalized by a bipartisan committee aimed at compromise (Sharp, 2016). There were several tenets to this reauthorization, with the focus mainly being on returning the power of education to state and local governments while reducing the federal government's involvement (Robinson, 2018). The Every Student Succeeds Act also attempted to improve upon the failings of No Child Left Behind in the areas of improving testing and accountability models (Dennis, 2017).

Within the framework of more flexibility and power to the states, legislators believed that ESSA should set high standards through maintaining assessments and accountability measures, use evidence-based interventions, and fund promising educational practices (Sharp, 2016). Although the authors of the ESSA believed that their legislation would solve the ills of the NCLB bill, there was and continues to be the dilemma of state and local flexibility coupled with authority from the federal government (Saultz et al., 2019). Major changes within the ESSA include eliminating the highly qualified teacher provisions of NCLB, more vocational training, and the removal of many parental notification policies (Adler-Greene, 2019). A movement from scripted curricula to the improvement of teacher professional learning was also a hallmark of the Every Student Succeeds Act and a move lauded by many teachers (Dennis, 2017). A final component of the ESSA was an attempt to keep working on equity, while many of the NCLB

provisions that focused on equity were stripped from federal legislation (Fusarelli & Ayscue, 2019). With several years passing since the inception of the Every Student Succeeds Act, there is evidence there are questions of whether ESSA has truly changed the accountability movement and the focus on standards, demanded equity, or improved teaching in general (Robinson, 2018).

Consequences of the Modern Reform Movement

After several decades of reform focused on standards, testing, and accountability, there is a myriad of consequences to the practice of teaching and learning (Elish-Piper et al., 2013). Many of these consequences are demonstrated through studies of teacher perceptions on the classroom, students, and the field of education in general (Hutchings, 2017). These studies point to a teach-to-the-test mentality that narrows the curriculum to those items most tested (Stotsky, 2016). Pedagogical limits such as a loss of personalization and creativity from both the teacher and their students are also prominent in the literature (Diamond, 2010; Dishke-Hondzel, 2014; Elish-Piper et al., 2013). With the increased focus on a standardized curriculum and the accompanying assessments for accountability, there is also evidence that student skills such as character education, social and emotional well-being, and health and safety are being left behind (Brewer, 2017; Slade & Griffith, 2013; Szabo, 2015). Many teachers feel as if the modern reform movement is denigrating their profession and forcing them to make unethical decisions around children, in addition to causing stress that is all leading to issues with student-teacher relationships and ultimately high levels of teacher attrition (Glazer, 2018; Ryan et al., 2017).

Curricular Implications. When nations, states, or districts adopt curriculum standards and assessments in an attempt to reform education through accountability, there are often several curricular consequences that effect students and their learning (O'Connor & McTaggart, 2017). The narrowing of the curriculum to focus more on tested subjects at the expense of subjects that

do not lead to sanctions such as social studies and the arts is a common outcome of teaching to

the test (Berliner, 2011). Due to the accountability that comes with failing to improve on state

standardized tests, many school districts turn to scripted programs that are aligned to the test and

expect teachers to use the programs with fidelity; this practice strips teachers of their autonomy

and students of their active engagement (Elish-Piper et al., 2013). The effect of scripted

programs and a lack of focus on a broad curriculum often leaves students disinterested and

failing to see the connections relevant to their learning (Chomsky & Robichaud, 2014). Another

negative consequence of the pressure that comes with accountability in education reform is the

constant test prep that leads to remediation for all students, regardless of their interests or needs

to extend their learning in other areas (Erskine, 2014). A final consequence of teaching to the test

is that the aforementioned concerns all appear to hurt the disadvantaged students that reform

purports to help more than their affluent counterparts (Stotsky, 2016).

       Instructional Implications. Modern education reform has not only changed what

students have to know and be able to do, but it has also changed how teachers instruct and what

activities are acceptable within the classroom (Hutchings, 2017). O'Connor and McTaggart

(2017) described how reform efforts had left teachers with little time to focus on exploration and

problem-solving while concentrating, instead, on memorization needed to pass standardized

tests. Erskine (2014) expanded on this notion by claiming that higher-order learning was

counterintuitive to the reform-based instruction that is maintained in many classrooms across the

country. A lack of instruction on critical thinking skills and a shortage of focus on teaching

students how to think for themselves is another consequence of the emphasis on accountability

mandates (Chomsky & Robichaud, 2014). Corcoran and Silander (2009) described the loss of

collaborative inquiry, which is linked to increased student achievement across many high schools

and in most content areas. Creativity, for students and teachers, was also compromised due to the pressure on teachers to increase test scores, with many teachers believing that they did not have time to let children be creative or be creative themselves (Dishke-Hondzel, 2014; Noddings, 2013). A final pedagogical consequence of the modern reform movement is the lack of personalization in instruction; Elish-Piper et al. (2013) described how teachers do not have the freedom to get to know their students as learners and provide individual support to meet their needs within the standardized classroom.

      Affective Implications. The affective domain is not only important to the development of students but is the foundation for the cognitive growth that the accountability movement requires; however, social and emotional knowledge has been hindered due to the concentration of teaching and learning within the efferent domain (Szabo, 2015). Slade and Griffith (2013) furthered this notion in explaining how a student's hierarchy of needs begins with the most basic physiological and safety needs to reach self-actualization. Lewallen et al. (2015) also concluded that students needed to be healthy and feel safe if they are to learn, but the consequences of the modern reform movement have made that more difficult. Students being educated within the modern reform era appear to have high levels of stress and anxiety, but instead of focusing on supporting these basic needs, many schools continue to focus on the cognitive aspects of education and then struggle when these students do not improve academically (Brewer, 2017). Diamond (2010) concluded that students needed to have a sense of autonomy, feel joy in the classroom, and build genuine relationships to gain the foundational affective skills needed to increase cognition. Students, however, have struggled to realize this foundation due to the accountability movement decreasing activities like field trips, recess, or the nonacademic activities that many students can feel joy or success in (Berliner, 2011). Of great concern to the

hierarchy of students' needs is the struggle to build genuine relationships with teachers who are stressed over the pressure of academics who, therefore, decrease the teachable moments that connect and build trust with their students (Lamb, 2001; Sanderse et al., 2015).

Teacher Implications. In addition to the classroom and student factors affected by reform, accountability practices affect teachers and the quality of learning in the classroom (Fisher-Ari et al., 2017). Ryan et al. (2017) explained that the accountability that comes from testing within the modern educational reform movement had caused significant stress in the lives of teachers, leading to exhaustion, absenteeism, and ultimately teachers leaving the profession. This level of stress affect not only the teacher but also their students, as teachers suffering from high levels of stress are less likely to build positive relationships with their students (Yoon, 2002). This lack of relationship is often seen as an inability to support students' social and emotional needs, which leads to behavior problems (Jeon et al., 2019). Collie et al. (2012) suggested that these behavior problems then affect a teacher's self-efficacy and job satisfaction, which in turn creates more stress, and a vicious cycle ensues. Glazer (2018) explained how accountability practices affect teacher self-efficacy and satisfaction but that the standardization of curriculum and implementation of assessment practices often lead to teacher attrition. Attrition is exacerbated by the fact that teachers do not feel as if their aspirations of making a difference in the lives of students are possible within cultures of reform (Sanderse et al., 2015). Szabo (2015) professed that this reform culture also asked teachers to break various ethical codes that led to teachers leaving the profession.

Rise of the Whole Child Movement

As the modern education reform movement gained steam in the early 2000s, with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, practitioners began to ponder

the effects that the standards-based movement was having on students (Szabo, 2015) and

teachers (Ryan et al., 2017). The curriculum and instruction consequences were now seen in

classrooms across the country, as was the lack of focus on the affective side of students and the

toll accountability was having on teachers (Elish-Piper et al., 2013). In response to these

consequences, practitioners set out to improve the educational system by creating a new vision

built on supporting the whole child and redefining success (Slade & Griffith, 2013; Trybus &

Gibson, 2015). This new vision for education was spearheaded by the Association for

Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD); ASCD organized a group of experts in

January of 2006 to commission a report on redefining learning and achievement while meeting

the greater needs of the students and society (ASCD, 2007). Lewallen et al. (2015) described the

efforts of this task force as working to ensure that educational policies were aimed at defining

learning more broadly to encompass not only traditional knowledge but also emotional and

physical health, the arts, and being life ready both civically and economically.

The ASCD commission concluded that for students to develop to their fullest potential,

schools, and the larger community, would need to focus on the whole child and not the specific

standards-based education that had governed the student achievement discussion over the past

few decades (ASCD, 2007). These leaders believed that for future students to be successful in a

complex and global economy, they would need a more well-rounded education (Trybus &

Gibson, 2015). The commission called on educators and all members of society to meet this

demand by focusing on five specific tenets of the whole child to put students first (ASCD, 2012).

The five specific tenets of health, safety, engagement, support, and challenge were all intended to

be sustainable within the education system and create involvement by the community (Slade &

Griffith, 2013).

Whole Child Tenet: Healthy. Slade and Griffith (2013) explained how promoting an educational system where all students are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy was the foundation of the whole child effort. Consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, ASCD (2007) believed that students who had their basic needs satisfied were not only more likely to perform but that those whose needs were not met would struggle with performance. Health was defined broadly in terms of student well-being and included physical fitness and healthy attitudes and behaviors; the commission was also keenly aware that this tenet was greatly affected by students' economic circumstances (Trybus & Gibson, 2015). The commission reviewed data that revealed how general health was correlated with attendance, concentration, behavior, and ultimately academic achievement (ASCD, 2012).

Whole Child Tenet: Safe. Similar to health, safety was another basic physiological and psychological need that the commission believed was essential to learning (ASCD, 2007). Diamond (2010) explained how student learning increased when students felt safe and secure in their setting and were accepted and cared for by their teacher. Brewer (2017) posited that today's students face challenges emotionally, including stress, anxiety, and often bullying; challenges that make students feel unsafe, and schools may not address this issue as they are inundated with academic challenges. The commission reviewed data that confirmed that feeling safe at school positively impacted academic engagement and achievement and increased well-being (ASCD, 2012).

Whole Child Tenet: Engaged. The ASCD (2012) described student engagement in school and within their communities as paramount to motivation and ultimately learning and positive values. Active engagement, where students are actively involved in their learning, is vital to academic achievement and to behavior (Lekwa et al., 2019). Morse and Allensworth

(2015) explained how student engagement increased student learning and had the ability to improve families and communities as well as the institution of schools. Engagement in the classroom and in schools was affected by teacher behavior, and those classrooms where students had a voice and had the program personalized toward their needs offered the greatest chance for students' engagement (Graham et al., 2018). The commission suggested that increased student engagement could increase student connectedness to the school and community and be accomplished through more voice, personalization, and involvement (ASCD, 2007).

Whole Child Tenet: Supported. The commission understood that for students to feel safe and become engaged, they needed to be supported by school personnel and build positive relationships with adults (ASCD, 2012). Diamond (2010) explained how a teacher's level of support is connected to their belief in the student and, in turn, the student's mindset. The student-teacher relationship directly affects the student's belief in their academic ability, and this belief is realized through positive or negative feedback from the teacher (McCutchen et al., 2016). Elish-Piper et al. (2013) described how the accountability movement led to climates where students and teachers did not create the meaningful relationships needed to enrich the educational experience. Yoon (2002) expanded on this notion and stated that the stress caused by educational reform has a negative effect on student-teacher relationships while agreeing that the quality of these relationships is of the utmost importance.

Whole Child Tenet: Challenged. Slade and Griffith (2013) described challenge as ensuring that every student was challenged academically to prepare them for college, a career, and compete globally. McCloskey (2011) suggested that although parents wanted a well-rounded education for their children, they still value the basics and expect schools to provide challenging academic content. The commission was clear that although they advocated for many aspects of a

whole child education, these concepts were conditions that needed to be met for students to realize their academic potential fully; the whole child proposal was not an argument for a less challenging academic culture (ASCD, 2007). The commission also noted that many college students were in constant need of remediation at the same time that the global economy called for a more robust set of skills to include communication and critical thinking (ASCD, 2012).

Whole Child Movement Legacy

After years of the modern education reform movement, it was clear to many that a new paradigm was needed to educate students for the 21st century (Slade & Griffith, 2013). Trybus and Gibson (2015) explained how the ASCD commission on the whole child set out to change the definition of success and offer a more well-rounded education to students, one that was grounded in science and research in terms of what is known about how students learn. The commission knew that this work could not be accomplished by schools alone and, therefore, included collaboration with communities as a cornerstone of the proposal (ASCD, 2007). The commission ended with several policy recommendations, in addition to the five tenets that education should focus on, including guidance to states to make a whole child education part of their practice and to inform the community of their progress (ASCD, 2012).

Motivation

Kovach (2018) described motivation as the intentional movement from a starting point to a specific ending point. Within this intentional movement, several factors contribute to how one performs, including their own interpersonal behavior and the physical environment in which they exist (Lazaroiu, 2015). Pink (2009) explained how motivation is both intrinsic (focused on human needs) and extrinsic (focused on rewards), with intrinsic needs being more powerful in motivating behaviors and extrinsic rewards often having demotivating properties. The strategy of

extrinsic motivation is seen in recent test-based accountability strategies in educational reform as legislators and leaders have assumed that the extrinsic theory of motivation would compel schools, leaders, teachers, and students to be motivated to change through positive and negative incentives (Supovitz, 2009). This concept has led Koenka (2019) to posit how students' motivation has been affected by the culture that modern education reform has created in schools and classrooms.

  Academic Motivation. Academic motivation, or the desire of students to engage in the learning process, is of the utmost importance to researchers (Hidajat et al., 2020). Koenka (2019) explained how academic motivation is an area of interest because of its connection to other behaviors related to improved learning for students and due to its illusiveness in terms of creating and maintaining it in students. Many factors have been shown to affect academic motivation in students, including social relationships with parents, teachers, and peers (King & Ganotice, 2014). Adamma et al. (2018) described how students' academic motivation tends to dwindle over time, with students who had higher levels of intrinsic motivation persisting longer. Students who had higher levels of academic motivation were also more likely to reach mastery, be curious, and have better attendance (Joseph et al., 2019). These positive attributes are also linked to a student's level of self-efficacy, or belief in their own capacity, which is in turn linked with high levels of academic motivation (Engin, 2020).

  Hidajat et al. (2020) described how academic motivation was crucial to student learning, persistence, and ultimately academic achievement. Joseph et al. (2019) explained how motivation is a determinant of academic achievement and performance in schools, possibly due to increased engagement; intrinsic motivation namely accounts for this correlation due to behavior being tied to personal enjoyment. Kovach (2018) explained how one's perception

(locus of control) in a situation is directly tied to their motivation and, therefore, their achievement. Adamma et al. (2018) explained how academic motivation was a key factor in learning and demonstrating academic achievement, and due to the social relationship aspect of motivation, parents and educators should be well-versed in understanding and supporting academic motivation. King and Ganotice (2014) described how social relationships lead to mastery and performance goals, which correlate with increased academic performance; therefore, increased student-teacher relationships increase motivation and, ultimately, achievement. Engin (2020) explained how all stakeholders need to consistently work toward increasing the motivation of students and their teachers, as there is a link between teacher motivation, teacher self-efficacy, student motivation, student self-efficacy, and academic achievement. Reiss (2009) suggested that determining why students are underperforming begins with understanding why they are not motivated and intervening at the ground level with motivational interventions.

Koenka (2019) described how a social-cognitive approach to understanding student and academic motivation was needed and believed that future education policy should be informed by motivation research. Cook and Artino (2016) posited that most motivational theories have several common concepts that include a degree of competence or self-efficacy, a belief in the value of the outcome, the attribution of control within that outcome, and a conscious and cognitive decision based on individual and social context. The extrinsic motivational nature of the current reform culture in education has changed behavior within schools; however, the reward and punishment cycle of reform has actually decreased the intrinsic motivation of many educators and only superficially changed education (Supovitz, 2009).

Self-Determination Theory

When studying motivation, self-determination theory (SDT) offers several insights to educators and researchers (Litalien et al., 2017). Self-determination theory, according to Oga-Baldwin et al. (2017), is a motivational macro theory built from five micro theories that are interrelated. Reeve (2012) defined these five micro theories within self-determination theory as consisting of basic needs theory, organismic integration theory, goal contents theory, cognitive evaluation theory, and causality orientation theory. Ratelle and Duchesne (2014) further described how the macro theory of self-determination examines the concept that all humans have psychological needs that are innate and that, when met, provide much-needed satisfaction.

The universal psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence are derived from the basic psychological need's mini theory within self-determination theory (Oga-Baldwin et al., 2017). Reeve (2012) posited that these needs are the basis of a student's intrinsic motivation, engagement, and executive functioning. Ratelle and Duchesne (2014) expanded to say that these basic needs are not only fundamental to a child realizing their full potential, but they are also the basis for students' behavioral and emotional regulation. Legault et al. (2006) described this level of intrinsic motivation as one end of a self-determination spectrum with extrinsic motivation on one end and amotivation on the other end. This concept fits within the mini theory of organismic integration theory, which Oga-Baldwin et al. (2017) described as the behavior regulation patterns of students, and it explains why students make choices about engaging in their schoolwork.

Autonomy. Autonomy, or the need for individuals to perceive their behavior as that of their own volition and not coerced by others, is a foundational component of self-determination theory (Schutte & Malouff, 2019). Van Assche et al. (2018) expanded the concept of autonomy

to include that fully realizing psychological freedom comes from an ability to stand behind actions that one has willfully accepted and endorsed. From an academic perspective, Ratelle and Duchesne (2014) posited that students must feel that their perspectives have been recognized, that they are involved in aspects of their education, and that there is a structure in the classroom if their autonomy is to be supported. If these conditions are met, students will be more motivated, which will lead to increased engagement; this reciprocal relationship then cycles back to increased motivation, and the progression continues (Reeve & Lee, 2014). As this progressive relationship of autonomy, motivation, and engagement continues, positive emotions, self-regulation, and academic achievement all increase (Patrick et al., 2019).

Competence. Competence is an individual's need to influence, and ultimately, master their environment by being successful and effective in challenges (Oga-Baldwin et al., 2017; Reeve, 2012). Olivier et al. (2020) described competence in an academic setting succeeding in school when a student wants to. Ratelle and Duchesne (2014) described how students' sense of competence often decreases as they progress through high school and as their satisfaction in competence decreases. Although competence may decrease for students in their teenage years, Legault et al. (2006) posited that a student's social network, including their parents, teachers, and friends, could all have a positive and cumulative effect on their feelings of competence if they are supportive. Furthermore, Reeve and Lee (2014) explained how a competence-centered classroom climate could help students engage with more effort.

Relatedness. Ratelle and Duchesne (2014) defined relatedness as the need for individuals to form emotional relationships with others that are both significant in nature and satisfying to the individual. Legault et al. (2006) described how relatedness has a significant impact on academic motivation, and this impact is positive when students and teachers form positive

relationships. Reeve (2012) expanded this notion and claimed that students desire warm and caring relationships with their teachers, and their need for relatedness is met when they feel this emotional bond in a reciprocal way. Olivier et al. (2020) described how a lack in the perception of relatedness not only led to decreased academic engagement but also social and behavioral problems. Cerasoli et al. (2016) explained how students, desiring these meaningful relationships, would move toward teachers and peers that provide an affective foundation for their needs and away from those who hinder the connection.

Needs Satisfaction, Intrinsic Motivation, Engagement, and Academic Achievement

Niemiec and Ryan (2009) described how satisfying the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness offer the best hope for intrinsic motivation to flourish and be sustained. Furthermore, Eyal and Roth (2011) further explained how intrinsic motivation leads to increased well-being and low levels of burnout while also increasing performance. Deci et al. (1991) posited that this intrinsic form of motivation led to increased enjoyment and adjustment to school as well as greater self-esteem and increased achievement. Reeve and Lee (2014) described this phenomenon by explaining how changes in student motivation led to reciprocal changes in students' academic engagement and how increased levels of engagement led to increased student outcomes.

Self-Determination Theory and Modern Educational Reform

Self-determination theory provides a theoretical framework for how individual needs are met, leading to increased intrinsic motivation and increased levels of performance (Fretz, 2015). Self-determination theory also provides a framework for analyzing why many failed reform efforts may not have worked in education (Sheldon & Biddle, 1998). Deci (2009) described how reform efforts must begin with an understanding that those involved in the reform have the basic

psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness and that for people to adopt and internalize the change, these needs must be met. Ryan and Weinstein (2009) suggested that many of the modern educational reform strategies, or external controls, undermine the basic psychological needs purported within self-determination theory and move both students and staff motivation from an intrinsic stance to an extrinsic position.

Modern Educational Reform and Autonomy. Ryan and Weinstein (2009) suggested that many aspects of the modern educational reform movement have led to a decreased level of autonomy for both students and teachers. From a student perspective, when students are asked to learn material so that they can score well on a test versus no mention of why they are learning the material, this rather simple nuance led to decreased interest and inferior conceptual learning of the content (Deci et al., 1991). Conversely, when students have an internal perceived locus of control and were asked to learn content so that they could teach someone else, their intrinsic motivation and conceptual learning both increased (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). There is a reciprocal relationship between students' autonomous motivation and teacher's autonomous motivation, as students who felt more autonomy in their classrooms had teachers who felt more autonomy in their ability to teach (Eyal & Roth, 2010). Unfortunately, many teachers enact a control-oriented classroom, often based on the control-oriented aspects of the modern educational reform movement and autonomous motivation dwindles in both teacher and student (Fretz, 2015). Sheldon and Biddle (1998) explained three types of autonomy support that could be employed for both teachers and students when working on internalizing change from external forces: validate perspective, provide choice, and provide rationale.

Modern Educational Reform and Competence. Cuevas et al. (2018) explained how modern educational reform teacher evaluations, which can be based primarily on student test

data, usually do more to undermine the self-determined motivation of teachers. Deci et al. (1991) posited that student intrinsic motivation increases, from a competence lens, when positive feedback is given, a phenomenon that rarely occurs in the standardized testing environment of modern education reform. Furthermore, Niemiec and Ryan (2009) suggested that students feel a sense of competence when they are able to be successful with the work they do at school, a task that modern educational reform has made more difficult. Ryan and Weinstein (2009) explained that high-stakes assessments within modern educational reform are often not at the right level of challenge and lead to amotivation among students. Korthagen and Evelein (2016) submitted that teachers who had their needs in terms of competence would not only provide more structure for students but would also demonstrate more leadership behaviors in the school, concepts that have shown to improve the psychological needs of students.

Modern Educational Reform and Relatedness. When teachers are under the pressure of modern educational reform constructs, there is a tendency to exert more control, sometimes unknowingly doing more harm than good (Fretz, 2015; Sheldon & Biddle, 1998). This exertion of control may, initially, attain a certain level of compliance from students but ultimately hurts motivation and conceptual learning (Ryan & Weinstein, 2009). Deci et al. (1991) explained that students could lose intrinsic motivation if they do not have involvement with their teachers and parents, especially in terms of autonomy, which is often suppressed in school cultures dominated by modern educational reform. School cultures dominated by modern educational reform also tend to have more pressure, which can lead to teacher burnout, a concept that diminishes motivation and subsequently the satisfying of the relatedness need (Eyal & Roth, 2010).

Importance of Student Voice

As defined by Cook-Sather (2014), student voice is the process by which students are not only consulted on their school experiences but are also invited to be contributors to the process of school improvement. Bourke and Loveridge (2014) expanded on this concept to include students' understanding in the areas of educational policy and practice. Student voice advocates often point to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 as evidence that children have an actual right to be heard on topics that pertain to their interest, such as education (Baroutsis et al., 2016). Although many believe that student voice is a right and is imperative to school improvement (Keddie, 2015), Goodman and Eren (2013) explained that some doubt students could truly be partners in their education when they have a history of being obedient to their teachers, who themselves may be reluctant to give up power and influence to their students. Elwood (2013) added that although many believe that student voice is important, the implementation of using student voice in decision-making is not happening pervasively.

Hall (2017) posited that students could provide researchers with valuable information that may be unattainable with other methods. However, the modern educational reform movement and the high-stakes that accompany the movement have teachers worried that student voice might be hampered as pressure to perform creates a top-down mentality (Goodman & Eren, 2013). Baroutsis et al. (2016) described how students often state that not being heard in school is a major reason for disengagement. Conversely, Keddie (2015) explained that school cultures that value student voice are filled with students who have greater agency and engagement in their learning. Furthermore, Elwood (2013) described positive outcomes such as increased learning and improved school environments and experiences in cultures where student voice was valued and acted upon.

Value of Student Perceptions

Nelson et al. (2014) reported that student perceptions offer crucial information to how students experience the classroom and are important in the work to improve education. However, Guess and Bowling (2014) asserted that student perceptions are missing in much of the research in terms of student experiences in school and that educators must listen to students as they have important messages for their teachers. Ruzek and Schenke (2019) expanded on this notion and stated that descriptions of student perceptions could help others understand how classroom climates impact motivation, engagement, and learning. Ruzek and Schenke (2019) also indicated that the student-perceived school climate could only be measured by asking students about their experiences and that their perceptions often vary from their teachers.

Ruzek and Schenke (2019) posited that student perceptions of their environments are a key cause to their ultimate beliefs in education. Driscoll (2014) clarified that student beliefs consist of opinions or perspectives of their teachers and educational environment where values are the worth, and they put on these constructs; furthermore, these beliefs and values affect their experience and educational outcomes. Ruzek and Schenke (2019) described that how a student formulates their perceptions is key in interpreting their beliefs and behaviors. Brown and Harris (2012) noted that students' beliefs are predictors of their behavior and their academic outcomes. Schenke et al. (2018) clarified that the perspectives of individual students appear to be consistent from year to year while there is usually an in-class variation from student to student, suggesting that student perceptions are complex and multifaceted. Brown and Harris (2012) further illuminated that students' beliefs often differ based on their individual environments and experiences. Guess and Bowling (2014) explained that school climate, or environment, and a student's well-being directly affects their sense of belonging and their academic achievement.

Walker and Greene (2009) stated that, during adolescence, student perceptions of their environment are relevant to their agency and that supportive environments are a key protective factor.

Student perception studies have indicated that students feel most supported by teachers who effectively manage their classroom, use effective instructional strategies, make learning fun, and personalize the education experience (Guess & Bowling, 2014). Walker and Greene (2009) advanced this notion in affirming that student perceptions of quality instruction and a teacher's articulation of relevancy increased their feelings of belonging. Guess and Bowling (2014) also explained that student perceptions of their teacher's supportive behaviors included creating an emotional connection with students. Walker and Greene (2009) posited that student perceptions of a warm and cohesive environment were a key predictor in students becoming resilient. Walker and Greene (2009) also suggested that student perceptions of support were linked to an interest in their academics, while perceptions of alienation were linked to decreased achievement.

Frenzel et al. (2018) explained that students' perceptions of their positive emotions in the classroom directly impact their engagement in school. Ruzek and Schenke (2019) clarified that whether or not a classroom climate ultimately affects a student's motivation and engagement depends on their perceptions in terms of recognizing the positive aspects of the climate and culture. Ruzek and Schenke (2019) also specified that students' various perspectives were what led to their attitudes and beliefs in terms of motivation and engagement. Frenzel et al. (2018) explained that student reports of positive classroom emotions, and the perception of their teacher's positive emotions, had a correlation to their intrinsic motivation. Ruzek and Schenke (2019) expounded that student perceptions of autonomy, which often dissipates in secondary school, are key to student motivation and engagement. You et al. (2016) added that student

perceptions of their teacher's behavior increase over time and positively correlate with their motivation.

Driscoll (2014) explained that transfer of learning is the ultimate goal of the teaching and learning process and that in order for students to transfer their learning, they need to have belief in and place value on the experience and the environment. Frenzel et al. (2018) described how student perceptions of their teacher's behavior influence their own experience and ultimately transfer of learning. Walker and Greene (2009) reported that students who perceive a sense of belonging in their school culture are more likely to be cognitively engaged in their schoolwork, which leads to increased academic achievement. Schenke et al. (2018) hypothesized that student perceptions not only affect their motivation, engagement, and achievement but that these factors also affect their orientations, creating a cycle of experiences for students. Nelson et al. (2014) furthered this notion by stating that high-quality classrooms generate an increase in motivation, engagement, and student achievement. Ruzek and Schenke (2019) stated that research had proven a direct link between students' behavioral engagement and their academic achievement. You et al. (2016) agreed in stating that students' perceptions of their teacher's behavior may affect their intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and their academic achievement.

Conclusion

The future of our education system and our country is in the hands of our current youth. Students have an expectation about their educational experience, and that expectation has a direct correlation to the ability to develop positive relationships and agency. If past education reform efforts have negatively impacted student expectations of their educational experience and led to decreased agency and relationships, it is easily understood that their efforts on measures of educational effectiveness would be impacted. If education is going to have appropriate measures

of success and the appropriate strategies to improve, student beliefs are going to have to be more clearly understood.

Chapter Summary

As our country continues to evolve and the aim of our education system stays consistent, economic, political, and social forces continue to drive needed improvement in education (Spring, 2016). The most recent iteration of education change, the modern educational reform movement, is characterized by a greater degree of accountability for all aspects of the education system (Hutchings, 2017). However, this most recent attempt to improve our schools has created unintended consequences for all involved (Elish-Piper et al., 2013). Due to the erosion of many basic tenets of education, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) chartered a commission to demonstrate the need for the education system to focus on the whole child (ASCD, 2007). The work of the ASCD is congruent with motivation science in understanding that students and their teachers have basic psychological needs that must be met for intrinsic motivation to flourish (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). These basic needs, as defined by self-determination theory, offer a framework for determining why the many iterations of modern educational reform have failed to offer the change that is needed (Sheldon & Biddle, 1998). In addition to following a framework grounded in motivational science, stakeholders must elevate the voices of the very students that reform is purported to help, as students are able to provide information on how reform methods are perceived and internalized (Hall, 2017).

Chapter 3: Research Method

This quantitative study's purpose was to investigate and describe recently graduated students' whole child experiences while in high school. Specifically, I aimed to explain the relationships among student perceptions of the whole child, self-determination theory of motivation, gender, and current postsecondary status. Leavy (2017) explained that quantitative research is best suited for measuring variables to demonstrate causal relationships and correlations.

This chapter includes the research design and methodology that was conducted in the study. The population and the setting are described, and information about the sample is also included. The surveys that were utilized, the data collection procedures, and the processes for analyzing the data are outlined in this chapter. Finally, assumptions, limitations, and ethical considerations undertaken in this study are discussed.

Generally, I hoped to gain an understanding of whether the modern reform movement in education created classroom conditions that hindered the whole child. Several factors must be understood to ascertain the impact of the modern reform movement on student perceptions of their whole child education. I hoped to prove the validity and reliability of a Whole Child Student Survey and further understand the utility of using this instrument to measure student perceptions. I hoped to gain an understanding of whether recently graduated students believed that whole child aspects, such as engagement, support, and challenge, were negatively affected by the intended and unintended consequences of the modern educational reform movement. Similarly, I hoped to gain an understanding of whether recently graduated students' beliefs about the motivational aspects of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were negatively affected during their high school experiences. I examined correlations between the various tenets of the

whole child initiative and the motivational tenets of self-determination theory. Understanding the complex nature of motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, and the relation to concepts such as engagement in the classroom was imperative to the study. I also anticipated furthering my understanding of the differing perceptions of students' school experiences based on their gender. I desired to learn how a student's motivation and whole child experiences might differ by gender. Finally, I hoped to comprehend how a student's perceptions of their whole child experiences and tenets of motivation may affect what they do after high school. The following research questions were developed to understand these various relationships.

Research Questions

  RQ1. What is the validity and reliability of the Whole Child Student Survey?

    H1. The Whole Child Student Survey will be valid and reliable.

  RQ2. Do recently graduated students, who were educated during the accountability movement, believe that certain aspects of the whole child (i.e., engagement, support, and challenge) were absent during their high school experience?

    H1. Recently graduated students will report that various aspects of the whole child were absent or negatively affected during their high school experience.

    H2. Recently graduated students will report that engagement was more negatively affected than other aspects of the whole child.

  RQ3. Do recently graduated students, who were educated during the accountability movement, believe that certain aspects of the self-determination theory of motivation (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) were absent during their high school experience?

H1. Recently graduated students will report that various aspects of their

motivation were absent or negatively affected during their high school

experience.

H2. Recently graduated students will report that autonomy was more negatively

affected than other aspects of their motivation.

RQ4. Is there a correlation between whole child tenets and self-determination theory of

motivation tenets?

H1. There will be a moderate to high degree of correlation between the whole

child tenets and self-determination theory of motivation tenets.

RQ5. Is there a gender difference in students' whole child high school experiences?

H1. More male students will report that various aspects of their whole child

experience were absent or negatively affected.

RQ6. Is there a postsecondary status difference in students' whole child high school

experiences?

H1. Students who are not currently furthering their formal education will report,

at a more substantial level, that various aspects of their whole child education

were absent or negatively affected.

H2. Students who are currently enrolled in a four-year institution of higher

education will report the least amount of impact to the various aspects of their

whole child education.

Research Design and Methodology

The goal of this quantitative, nonexperimental, casual comparative, and correlational

study was to examine systems on a broader level; replication and repeatability were of the utmost

importance. For this to occur, comparisons and correlations needed to be analyzed, and these concepts were most effectively accomplished using quantitative research (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017).

This study's hypothesized that current classroom conditions negatively affected the whole child concept of education as well as the intrinsic motivation of students due mainly to the modern educational reform movement. I theorized that focusing on reform measures did not provide academic achievement gains expected while also hindering students' intrinsic motivation through a culture that impedes the development of the whole child. From this lens, a postpositivist approach to identify and assess the variables was utilized (Creswell, 2014).

It is believed that the instrument used to measure the whole child tenets of education is valid and reliable and that the data collected supported the various aspects of this study. I believed that a large portion of students studied would perceive their high school education to have been negatively affected in terms of their engagement, support, and challenge. I also believed the study would demonstrate that many students did not feel engaged in their studies due to the focus on various reform movements, such as standardized testing. I believed that students would perceive their intrinsic and academic motivation to have been negatively affected by constructs of the reform movement, like stressed-out teachers having less energy to build real relationships with them. It was likely that students would perceive less autonomy in their high school experience and correlate that to less student engagement. It was also likely that there would be a direct correlation between tenets of the Whole Child Student Survey and tenets of the self-determination theory of motivation. Specifically, it was assumed that there would be a significant correlation between a student's perception of autonomy and their perception of engagement in high school.

I assumed that perceptions of classroom conditions would be related to a student's gender, as well as their current postsecondary status. It was also assumed that females would be more intrinsically motivated due to their perception of an education more focused on the whole child. I hypothesized that students who perceived their education to be focused on the whole child would be more intrinsically engaged and that their postsecondary status would be that of a student enrolled in a four-year college. Conversely, those students who did not perceive their education to be focused on the whole child would demonstrate lower intrinsic motivation and current postsecondary status of being in the workforce versus continuing their education. These hypotheses led to the development of the research questions noted earlier and the design of the study (Delost & Nadder, 2014).

A nonexperimental design was chosen as the variables were not able to be manipulated (Johnson, 2001). A causal comparative research design was conducted to compare groups (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, a correlational study was designed where I examined, measured, interpreted, and discovered the connection between variables in an attempt to describe a phenomenon (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Seeram (2019) explained that researchers who utilize correlation studies illuminate the interactions of variables and allow others to make predictions based on the relationships of those variables. This prediction was important to the study as the cycle of reform needs predictive data to inform leaders and politicians to follow science as the next iteration of reform is enacted.

The results of two surveys were correlated and analyzed through the lens of academic engagement and student learning. Furthermore, the same data was analyzed based on students' gender and their current postsecondary status.

Population and Setting

The target population for this research study was students who recently graduated high school from a large, suburban school district in a western state of the United States. As I intended to study student perceptions of the K–12 modern educational reform movement, it was imperative to survey those students who spent the majority of their time in the classrooms impacted by recent reform efforts. I identified students who graduated in the past two years and spent a majority of their time in public schools. Recently graduated students were currently in a four-year or two-year college, a trade school, the military, or the workforce.

Sample

The intended sample for this study was representative of the population; therefore, the results are generalizable to the population (El-Masri, 2017). Peng et al. (2012) explained that various organizations emphasized the need for researchers to ensure appropriate statistical power with an adequate sample size and stating these procedures in their report. The first step I took in determining the sample size needed for this study was to run an a priori power analysis of the research questions that were correlations or comparisons. Chen and Liu (2019) stated that an a priori power analysis is used to determine the minimum sample size that is needed for a given power, effect size, and α level. I used G*Power 3.1 software to perform the various power calculations. Due to the fact that I would be conducting multiple analyses on the same dependent variable, a Bonferroni correction was utilized when determining sample size. A Bonferroni correction is used to decrease the chances of a type I error by adjusting the probability values in research designs with multiple statistical tests (Armstrong, 2014).

For Research Question 4, the correlation between the tenets of the whole child and the self-determination theory of motivation, I ran a correlation: bivariate normal model test with an a

priori power analysis. My hypothesis was that there would be a correlation between the whole child and self-determination theory of motivation tenets. I chose two-tailed tests as a parameter. I chose a medium effect size of 0.3 for this calculation. I also chose an error probability of .05 and a power of .95. Using G*Power, I ran these calculations and determined that I would need a sample size of 138 respondents for this research question.

For Research Question 5, the comparison between gender and student perceptions of their whole child high school experiences, I ran a means: the difference between two independent means (two-groups) *t* test with an a priori power analysis. I chose a two-tailed test as a parameter. I chose a medium effect size. For this calculation, 0.5 is the value for a medium effect size. The error probability and corresponding power standard for this research question were 0.017 and 0.983 due to the fact that I used a Bonferroni correction because I would be running numerous comparisons on the same dependent variable. The Bonferroni correction, or dividing the original α (0.05) by the number of comparisons (3), gave me 0.017 as the adjusted error probability level. Using G*Power, I ran these calculations and determined that I would need a sample size of 164 respondents for this research question.

For Research Question 6, the comparison between postsecondary status and student perceptions of their whole child high school experiences, I ran an ANOVA: fixed-effects, omnibus, one-way *F* test with an a priori power analysis. My hypothesis was that students who were currently in four-year institutions would have perceived their high school experience more aligned with the tenets of the whole child framework. Correspondingly, I hypothesized that those students who went straight into the workforce would have perceived their high school experience less aligned with the tenets of the whole child framework. However, since I did not know what comparisons would be demonstrated in the study, I chose two-tailed tests as a parameter. I chose

a medium effect size. For this calculation, 0.25 is the value for a medium effect size. The error probability and corresponding power standard for this research question were still 0.017 and 0.983 because I continued to use a Bonferroni correction as I would be running numerous comparisons on the same dependent variable. The Bonferroni correction was calculated by dividing the original α (0.05) by the number of comparisons (3), which gave 0.017 as the adjusted error probability level. Using G*Power, I ran these calculations and determined that I would still need a sample size of 450 respondents for this research question. However, this calculation was later changed as the incoming data was categorized into two areas: college and noncollege. Students who selected four-year or two-year college were categorized as "college," and those who selected trade school, military, or workforce were categorized as "noncollege." Therefore, with only two groups instead of the original five, and similar to the comparison of gender, I ran a means: the difference between two independent means (two groups) t test with an a priori power analysis. I chose a two-tailed test as a parameter. I chose a medium effect size. For this calculation, 0.5 was the value for a medium effect size. The error probability and corresponding power standard for this research question were 0.017 and 0.983 due to the fact that I used a Bonferroni correction because I would be running numerous comparisons on the same dependent variable. The Bonferroni correction, or dividing the original α (0.05) by the number of comparisons (3), gave me 0.017 as the adjusted error probability level. Using G*Power, I ran these calculations and determined that I would need a sample size of 164 respondents for this research question.

A simple random sampling process was used so every graduate would have an equal chance of being selected (Leavy, 2017). The sample size was adequate for generalizability, as was the selection criteria (Delice, 2010). Ultimately, the sample size was, at a minimum, the

largest percentage of responses possible while recognizing demographic variables. The selection criteria ensured that the sample was diversified in terms of gender, geography, size of the school, and postsecondary status to eliminate bias (Fowler & Lapp, 2019). In using the largest sample size from the G* Power calculations, 450 student responses were originally needed for the study to be valid. However, after recalculating due to the compression of postsecondary options, 164 responses were ultimately needed. Assuming an approximate 50% response rate, I initially attempted to contact roughly 1,000 former students to participate in the survey. Participants were invited to participate in the survey through email. Student information was gathered from the Naviance platform, where students created postsecondary plans during their time in high school. A majority of students identified a personal email address for further communication with their high school, and I used that information to send the email out to a large number of recent graduates. Due to possible survey system errors, I sent the email to an additional 1,000 respondents, also randomly sampled. There were 103 responses to the survey invitation.

Materials and Instruments

I focused on two surveys, which were given to describe phenomena at a given time and place (Counelis, 2000). I began with collecting demographic data on gender and postsecondary status to ensure a diversified sample and to make further generalizations about the data. The Whole Child Student Survey (see Appendix A) was the first set of questions asked, and the respondents were asked to identify whether or not reform initiatives have hindered the whole child aspects of engagement, support, and challenge. I developed this survey based on the tenants of the whole child framework (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2007) to measure student perceptions of their school experience in regard to the whole child components. The survey has approximately 60 questions and was scored using a Likert scale.

Additionally, the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale was given to identify the level of autonomy, competence, and relatedness that students felt in their educational experience. The Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale is a readily available public instrument used in numerous countries to assess aspects of the self-determination theory of motivation. This survey has 12 questions and was also scored on a Likert scale.

Whole Child Student Survey

The first survey, the Whole Child Student Survey, measured the degree to which students believed reform had created classroom conditions that inhibited aspects of the whole child. The concept of whole child education was spotlighted by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) in 2006. The ASCD (2007) commissioned a group of leaders to ensure that various aspects of education were not abandoned as a result of the focus on academic achievement tests. The commission determined that communities and schools must focus on the areas of health, safety, engagement, support, and challenge if students were to meet the demands of the 21st century. The whole child network offered many supports to communities and schools that wanted to implement the whole child framework. As part of this work, the network developed indicators for each of the whole child tenets (ASCD, 2012). I examined the indicators from the tenets of engagement, support, and challenge and adapted them to student-facing questions about their experience in each of these areas. The survey has content validity as the questions directly related to the concept of whole child education and measured the correlation to the whole child tenets. This survey gave me information on student perceptions of the educational conditions in reference to the whole child movement.

Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale

The Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale (BPNSFS) was used to identify students' perceptions of their intrinsic motivation in relation to self-determination theory (see Appendix B). Specifically, this scale measured a student's perceptions of their need's satisfaction and frustration in the tenets of self-determination theory (Chen et al., 2015). The premise of this survey is based on self-determination theory and the idea that individuals have needs in the areas of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in order to be satisfied and academically motivated (Ratelle & Duchesne, 2014). The BPNSFS explicitly measures an individual's satisfaction in the three areas of self-determination and also measures frustration in the same areas. This survey has been used numerous times in diverse settings with both children and adults, and it is translated into many languages, making it a valid and reliable instrument (Chen et al., 2015). I used Google Translate to convert the student version of this survey into English for this study. A recent study identified the validity and reliability of the BPNSFS in a Spanish context and between genders (Cardella et al., 2020). The BPNSFS was also reviewed in a recent Italian study, and the researchers found that the scales were again valid and reliable and useful in measuring needs satisfaction and frustration in an Italian setting (Costa et al., 2018). Similarly, a recent Polish study determined that the BPNSFS was valid and reliable in a Polish context, demonstrating internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Kuźma et al., 2020). A German study not only found that the BPNSFS was valid and reliable but that the results predicted ill-being (Heissel et al., 2018).

Demographics

The variables of gender and postsecondary status are important as I hypothesized that there would be differences in the perceptions of students. The variable of gender had three

possibilities, male or identifies as male, female or identifies as female, and, in an effort to be

fully inclusive, other, where the respondent could identify their gender in whatever manner they

preferred. The variable of postsecondary status had five different options for the respondents to

choose. The first option, in a four-year college, was for those who were currently enrolled full-

or part-time in a four-year university. Similarly, the two-year college option was for those

respondents who were currently enrolled full- or part-time in a two-year college. The third

option, in trade school, was for those individuals who were enrolled in a trade school. The fourth

option was for those students who were actively serving our country in the armed forces. Option

five, in the workforce, was for those individuals who were currently not enrolled in any further

education or training and were working full-time or part-time.

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

I used Alchemer as the tool to gather the data on student perceptions. I took the email

addresses collected from the Naviance system and sent the Alchemer invitation to all former

students in the database. The demographic data and the perception data that was collected from

the Whole Child Student Survey and the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration

Scale were loaded into SPSS software for analysis.

Validity and Reliability

RQ1. What is the validity and reliability of the Whole Child Student Survey?

It is assumed that the Whole Child Student Survey has content validity as the survey

questions were adapted from the whole child tenets and should measure the latent concept of

whole child supports. I correlated answers on the Whole Child Student Survey to those on the

self-determination theory survey in an attempt to demonstrate criterion validity through

concurrent validity. To determine the reliability of the Whole Child Student Survey, I determined

the coefficient alpha to demonstrate internal consistency within each of the three concepts of the whole child.

Descriptive

RQ2. Do recently graduated students, who were educated during the accountability movement, believe that certain aspects of the whole child (i.e., engagement, support, and challenge) were absent during their high school experience?

RQ3. Do recently graduated students, who were educated during the accountability movement, believe that certain aspects of the self-determination theory of motivation (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) were absent during their high school experience?

Muijs (2004) explained that examining univariate statistics was the preferred first step in analyzing the data compiled from quantitative studies. I recorded various descriptive statistics for the three components of the Whole Child Student Survey and the three components of the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale. Before analyzing the three major forms of descriptive statistics, I checked the data for normality, including skewness and kurtosis. Mishra et al. (2019) stated that a normally distributed data set was imperative to univariate statistics and for drawing meaningful conclusions about the data. The first step in exploring the univariate statistics from my study was to look at the frequency distributions or how many students answered each question in a specific way. I then identified the various measures of central tendency, mean, median, and mode for each of the six tenets measured in the survey. Lastly, I analyzed the spread of the data as I analyzed the measures of dispersion.

Correlation

RQ4. Is there a correlation between whole child tenets and self-determination theory of motivation tenets?

I determined there was a correlation between the whole child tenets and the self-determination theory of motivation tenets. Specifically, the three tenets of the whole child framework and the three tenets of the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale were correlated using Pearson's *r* correlation coefficient. Rodgers and Nicewander (1988) posited that calculating the correlation coefficient between variables is the best statistical method for demonstrating an association.

Comparison

RQ5. Is there a gender difference in students' whole child high school experiences?

The final data analysis for this study was in the relationships of demographic variables. For gender, I conducted a *t* test to compare males to females in their perceptions of their whole child experiences while they were in high school. Three separate *t* tests were conducted for the three tenets of the whole child: engagement, support, and challenge. Xu et al. (2017) explained that two-sample *t* tests are appropriate when the two data samples, male and female in this instance, are statistically independent and the comparison of means is needed.

RQ6. Is there a postsecondary status difference in students' whole child high school experiences?

For postsecondary status, I conducted a *t* test to compare the perception of students who were in college (four- or two-year) with those who were working (trade school, military, and workforce). Three separate *t* tests were conducted for each tenet within the whole child framework. Engagement, support, and challenge were all compared to the two major areas of postsecondary status: in college or not in college.

Researcher Role

My role as the researcher was to ascertain the most effective and efficient way to gather the appropriate amount of data from a diverse group. I was responsible for collecting the data and inputting the data into SPSS software. I analyzed the data looking for various aspects of comparison and correlation between the variables tested. Finally, I reported on the findings and made generalizations about the data.

Ethical Considerations

There were few ethical considerations in this study. I only surveyed students who had graduated and were no longer minor children. I had an ethical obligation to be clear and transparent with the study's design and the information collected. I worked with the chief systems performance officer at the district where this study took place and ensured that all protocols about collecting data were followed. Emails were collected from the Naviance system, and only one other person, the data clerk, had access to this information, and her copy was destroyed once transferred to me. As I sent an email to all respondents, I kept all emails secure on a personal computer in my home. I ensured that email addresses were not disclosed or sent to other respondents. I also kept the data confidential as the surveys were returned. I stored all of this data and the analysis of this data on my secure home computer. I had an ethical obligation to make appropriate generalizations with the data and not make illogical leaps to prove a hypothesis. Finally, I was responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the study were accurate and that all information was correctly cited and calculated.

Assumptions

The assumptions for this quantitative, nonexperimental, casual comparative, and correlational study were that the study results would be generalizable to other school districts and

states that have enacted similar education reforms over the past several decades. It was assumed that the Whole Child Student Survey would be valid and reliable in measuring student perceptions of their whole child experience. It was also assumed that graduates who wound up in different postsecondary paths might have had different experiences and, therefore, would answer the various questions in a different manner. Similarly, it was assumed that males and females might have had dissimilar experiences in school and would therefore have different perceptions of the whole child aspects of education and their intrinsic motivation. Finally, it was assumed that those students who indicated a perception of the loss of the whole child aspects of education would also perceive lower autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their educational experience.

Limitations

This study's limitations were in the generalizations that were made about various relationships. Although the data may have supported comparisons and correlations between various aspects of the data, there was no proof in terms of causation. The comparisons and correlations that appeared within the data simply determined that there was a comparison or correlation between two sets of data, but I was not able to determine if one variable caused another. I am most familiar with Colorado schools and how the educational program in this state has been affected by reform; therefore, the findings are limited to education in Colorado and the district that was studied.

Chapter Summary

In this study, I attempted to describe comparisons and correlations between the classroom conditions caused by the modern educational reform movement and a lack of intrinsic motivation by students within the theoretical framework of self-determination theory. I surveyed recent

graduates of a large, suburban school district in the Western United States and attempted to sample a diverse group of graduates to generalize the results. A whole child survey and a needs satisfaction survey were the variables in this study, and correlations and associations were analyzed. I hope to share this data to inform legislators and leaders about the consequences of the modern educational reform movement and chart a more scientifically based path forward.

Chapter 4: Results

This study's purpose was to investigate and describe the whole child experiences of recently graduated high school students. This chapter contains the findings of the perceived relationships between various tenets of the whole child, self-determination theory of motivation, gender, and the current postsecondary status of recently graduated high school students. For most statistical calculations, 103 former students completed the survey, and their data is displayed throughout this chapter. Through quantitative analysis, I hoped to understand how the modern reform movement impacted student perceptions of their whole child education. I display these findings as they pertain to each research question. I present data to support the validity and reliability of the Whole Child Student Survey, descriptive statistics to demonstrate students' perceptions of their high school experiences, correlative data between whole child and self-determination theory tenets, and comparative data on gender and postsecondary status.

Research Question 1

RQ1. What is the validity and reliability of the Whole Child Student Survey?

The first research question focused on determining the validity and reliability of the Whole Child Student Survey developed for this research study. Content validity, which Muijs (2004) described as questions that accurately assess the concept that I attempted to measure, was achieved by developing questions directly from the whole child tenets developed by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum (ASCD). Tables 1, 2, and 3 demonstrate the alignment between the whole child tenets (ASCD, 2012) and the instrument created to measure student perceptions. This provides evidence of content validity.

Table 1

Whole Child Engaged Tenets

Tenets and Questions	Description
Whole Child Tenet	Our teachers use active learning strategies, such as cooperative learning and project-based learning.
Survey Question	My high school teachers used active learning strategies, such as cooperative learning and project-based learning.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school offers a range of opportunities for students to contribute to and learn within the community at large, including service learning, internships, apprenticeships, mentorships, and volunteer projects.
Survey Question	My high school offered a range of opportunities for me to contribute to and learn within the community at large, including service learning, internships, apprenticeships, and volunteer projects.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school policies and climate reinforce citizenship and civic behaviors by students, family members, and staff and include meaningful participation in decision-making.
Survey Question	My high school policies and climate reinforced citizenship and civic behaviors by students, family members, and staff and included meaningful participation in decision-making.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school uses curriculum-related experiences such as field trips and outreach projects to complement and extend our curriculum and instruction.
Survey Question	My high school used curriculum-related experiences such as field trips and outreach projects to complement and extend my curriculum and instruction.
Whole Child Tenet	Each student in our school has access to a range of options and choices for a wide array of extracurricular and cocurricular activities that reflect student interests, goals, and learning profiles.
Survey Question	In my high school, I had access to a range of options and choices for a wide array of extracurricular and cocurricular activities that reflected my interests, goals, and learning profiles.
Whole Child Tenet	Our curriculum and instruction promote students' understanding of the real-world, global relevance, and application of learned content.
Survey Question	My high school's curriculum and instruction promoted my understanding of the real-world, global relevance, and application of learned content.
Whole Child Tenet	Our teachers use a range of inquiry-based, experiential learning tasks and activities to help all students deepen their understanding of what they are learning and why they are learning it.
Survey Question	My high school teachers used a range of inquiry-based, experiential learning tasks and activities to help me deepen my understanding of what I learned and why I learned it.

Tenets and Questions	Description
Whole Child Tenet	Our staff works closely with students to help them monitor and direct their own progress.
Survey Question	My high school's staff worked closely with me to help me monitor and direct my own progress.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school expects and prepares students to assume age-appropriate responsibility for learning through effective decision-making, goal setting, and time management.
Survey Question	My high school expected and prepared me to assume age-appropriate responsibility for learning through effective decision-making, goal setting, and time management.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school supports, promotes, and reinforces responsible environmental habits through recycling, trash management, sustainable energy, and other efforts.
Survey Question	My high school supported, promoted, and reinforced responsible environmental habits through recycling, trash management, sustainable energy, and other efforts.

Table 2

Whole Child Supported Tenets

Tenets and Questions	Description
Whole Child Tenet	Our school personalizes learning, including the flexible use of time and scheduling, to meet academic and social goals for each student.
Survey Question	My high school personalized my learning, including the flexible use of time and scheduling to meet my academic and social goals.
Whole Child Tenet	Our teachers use a range of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment tasks to monitor student progress, provide timely feedback, and adjust teaching-learning activities to maximize student progress.
Survey Question	My high school teachers used a range of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment tasks to monitor my progress, provide timely feedback, and adjust teaching-learning activities to maximize my progress.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school ensures that adult-student relationships support and encourage each student's academic and personal growth.
Survey Question	My high school ensured that adult-student relationships supported and encouraged my academic and personal growth.
Whole Child Tenet	Each student has access to school counselors and other structured academic, social, and emotional support systems.
Survey Question	I had access to school counselors and other structured academic, social, and emotional support systems.

Tenets and Questions	Description
Whole Child Tenet	Our school staff understands and makes curricular, instructional, and school improvement decisions based on child and adolescent development and student performance information.
Survey Question	My high school staff understood and made curricular, instructional, and school improvement decisions based on my development and student performance information.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school personnel welcome and include all families as partners in their children's education and significant members of the school community.
Survey Question	My high school personnel welcomed and included my family, and significant members of my school community, as partners in my education.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school uses a variety of methods across languages and cultures to communicate with all families and community members about the school's vision, mission, goals, activities, and opportunities for students.
Survey Question	My high school used a variety of methods across languages and cultures to communicate with my family and my community about the school's vision, mission, goals, activities, and opportunities for me.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school helps families understand available services, advocate for their children's needs, and support their children's learning.
Survey Question	My high school helped my family understand available services, advocate for my needs, and support my learning.
Whole Child Tenet	Every member of our school staff is well qualified and properly credentialed.
Survey Question	Every member of my high school's staff was well qualified and properly credentialed.
Whole Child Tenet	All adults who interact with students both within the school and through extracurricular, cocurricular, and community-based experiences teach and model prosocial behavior.
Survey Question	All adults whom I interacted with, both within the school and through extracurricular, cocurricular, and community-based experiences, taught and modeled prosocial behavior.

Table 3

Whole Child Challenged Tenets

Tenets and Questions	Description
Whole Child Tenet	Each student in our school has access to challenging, comprehensive curriculum in all content areas.
Survey Question	In my high school, I had access to challenging, comprehensive curriculum in all content areas.

Tenets and Questions	Description
Whole Child Tenet	Our curriculum and instruction provide opportunities for students to develop critical thinking and reasoning skills, problem-solving competencies, and technology proficiency.
Survey Question	The curriculum and instruction in my high school provided opportunities for me to develop critical thinking and reasoning skills, problem-solving competencies, and technology proficiency.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school collects and uses qualitative and quantitative data to support student academic and personal growth.
Survey Question	My high school collected and used qualitative (observed) and quantitative (scores) data to support my academic and personal growth.
Whole Child Tenet	Our curriculum, instruction, and assessment demonstrate high expectations for each student.
Survey Question	The curriculum, instruction, and assessment of my high school demonstrated high expectations for me as a student.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school works with families to help all students understand the connection between education and lifelong success.
Survey Question	My high school worked with my family to help us understand the connection between education and lifelong success.
Whole Child Tenet	Our curriculum and instruction include evidence-based strategies to prepare students for further education, career, and citizenship.
Survey Question	The curriculum and instruction in my high school included evidence-based strategies to prepare me for further education, career, and citizenship.
Whole Child Tenet	Our extracurricular, cocurricular, and community-based programs provide students with experiences relevant to higher education, careers, and citizenship.
Survey Question	The extracurricular, cocurricular, and community-based programs at my high school provided me with experiences relevant to higher education, career, and citizenship.
Whole Child Tenet	Our curriculum and instruction develop students' global awareness and competencies, including an understanding of language and culture.
Survey Question	The curriculum and instruction in my high school developed my global awareness and competencies, including understanding of language and culture.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school monitors and assesses extracurricular, cocurricular, and community-based experiences to ensure students' academic and personal growth.
Survey Question	My high school monitored and assessed my extracurricular, cocurricular, and community-based experiences to ensure my academic and personal growth.
Whole Child Tenet	Our school provides cross-curricular opportunities for learning with and through technology.
Survey Question	My high school provided cross-curricular opportunities for learning with and through technology.

In addition to content validity, concurrent validity was assumed when developing the Whole Child Student Survey. Concurrent validity is achieved by analyzing scores on an instrument with other instruments or factors where there is an assumed relationship (Muijs, 2004). In this case, Table 4 displays moderate and high degrees of correlation between two theoretically similar constructs, the Whole Child Student Survey, which measures student perceptions of their school experiences (ACSD, 2012) and the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale (BPNSFS), which measures a student's perceptions of their need's satisfaction and frustration in the tenets of the self-determination theory (Chen et al., 2015).

Table 4

Whole Child Survey Validity

Description	Support	Challenge	Autonomy	Relatedness	Competence
Engage	.854*	.836*	.701*	.408*	.486*
Support		.812*	.650*	.423*	.434*
Challenge			.655*	.460*	.480*
Autonomy				.442*	.581*
Relatedness					.517*

Note: * correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

As a demonstration of reliability, internal consistency can be determined by a coefficient alpha of greater than 0.7 (Muijs, 2004). Table 5 demonstrates internal consistency reliability by showing the homogenous nature of the 10 items within each concept of the Whole Child Student Survey.

Table 5

Whole Child Survey Reliability

Test	Engage	Support	Challenge
Cronbach's Alpha	.905	.915	.919

Research Question 2

    RQ2. Do recently graduated students, who were educated during the accountability movement, believe that certain aspects of the whole child (i.e., engagement, support, and challenge) were absent during their high school experience?

    Research Question 2 described recently graduated high school students' perceptions of their whole child experiences while in high school. Specifically, perceptions of students' perceptions with three aspects of whole child experiences of engaged, supported, and challenged are reported. Table 6 displays the central tendency measure of the mean for each tenet of the whole child and the spread measure of standard deviation. The scale for Research Question 2 ranged from 1–4 with the means of 2.71 for engaged, 2.71 for supported, and 2.76 for challenged, all demonstrating whole child experiences, which were relatively high. The distribution measures of kurtosis and skewness are also displayed and demonstrate evidence for normality.

Table 6

Whole Child Descriptive Statistics

Measure	Engage	Support	Challenge
M	2.71	2.71	2.76
SD	0.64	0.67	0.66
Kurtosis	0.14	-0.26	0.37
Skewness	-0.13	-0.07	-0.30

Research Question 3

RQ3. Do recently graduated students, who were educated during the accountability movement, believe that certain aspects of the self-determination theory of motivation (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) were absent during their high school experience?

Similarly, Research Question 3 described recently graduated high school students' perceptions of the self-determination theory of motivation while in high school. Specifically, perceptions of students' involvement with autonomy, competence, and relatedness are reported. Table 7 displays the central tendency measure of the mean for each tenet of the self-determination theory of motivation and the spread measure of standard deviation. The scale for Research Question 3 also ranged from 1–4 with the means of 2.52 for autonomy, 2.88 for relatedness, and 2.93 for competence, all similarly demonstrating self-determination theory of motivation tenets were relatively high. The distribution measures of kurtosis and skewness are also displayed and demonstrate evidence for normality.

Table 7

Self-Determination Descriptive Statistics

Measure	Autonomy	Relatedness	Competence
M	2.52	2.88	2.93
SD	0.62	0.75	0.79
Kurtosis	0.27	-0.36	-0.29
Skewness	-0.05	-0.46	-0.55

Research Question 4

RQ4. Is there a correlation between whole child tenets and self-determination theory of motivation tenets?

The correlations between the tenets of whole child and the factors of self-determination theory of motivation were the subject of Research Question 4. Correlation coefficients are displayed in Table 8 and represent moderate to high positive relationships.

Table 8

Whole Child and Self-Determination Tenet Correlations

Description	Support	Challenge	Autonomy	Relatedness	Competence
Engage	.854*	.836*	.701*	.408*	.486*
Support		.812*	.650*	.423*	.434*
Challenge			.655*	.460*	.480*
Autonomy				.442*	.581*
Relatedness					.517*

Note: * correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 5

RQ5. Is there a gender difference in students' whole child high school experiences?

Research Question 5 compares the whole child high school experiences of recently graduated students who identify as male with those who identify as female. Three students who did not identify their gender were not included in this portion of the study. Table 9 displays the number of students in each category as well as the mean and standard deviation for each identified gender and tenet of the whole child. Table 10 displays the *t*-test data for each whole child tenet. There were no significant differences in whole child experiences based on identified gender.

Table 9

Whole Child Gender Descriptive Statistics

Description	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Engage (male)	46	2.70	.74
Engage (female)	57	2.73	.56
Support (male)	46	2.72	.72
Support (female)	57	2.70	.64
Challenge (male)	46	2.72	.74
Challenge (female)	57	2.78	.60

Table 10

Whole Child Gender Comparisons (Equal Variances Assumed)

Description	*t*	Sig.
Engage	-.253	.801
Support	.148	.883
Challenge	-.440	.661

Research Question 6

RQ6. Is there a postsecondary status difference in students' whole child high school experiences?

Research Question 6 was a comparison of the whole child high school experiences of recently graduated students who identified as being currently enrolled in a two-year or four-year college with those who identified as being in the workforce, military, or a trade school. Table 11 displays the number of students in each category as well as the mean and standard deviation for

each identified postsecondary status and tenet of the whole child. Table 12 displays the *t*-test data

for each whole child tenet. There was not a significant difference in the whole child experiences

based on postsecondary status for the tenet of challenge, but there were significant differences

found for the tenets of engage and support.

Table 11

Whole Child Postsecondary Descriptive Statistics

Description	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Engage (college)	80	2.79	.62
Engage (work)	23	2.44	.66
Support (college)	80	2.78	.67
Support (work)	23	2.46	.65
Challenge (college)	80	2.82	.67
Challenge (work)	23	2.55	.62

Table 12

Whole Child Postsecondary Comparisons (Equal Variances Assumed)

Description	*t*	Sig.
Engage	2.336	.021
Support	2.010	.047
Challenge	1.692	.094

Chapter Summary

The findings presented in Chapter 4 allowed me to display data in reference to each

research question within this study. I demonstrated that the Whole Child Student Survey was

valid and reliable, being appropriate for use in this study. I also described the perceptions of 103 students in relation to high school experiences with both whole child and self-determination theory of motivation tenets. Data was presented that demonstrated a high degree of correlation for areas among the whole child tenets and moderate correlations for other areas within the study. I also presented data that demonstrated a statistically significant difference in the whole child experiences of engagement and support for students who are currently enrolled in college versus those in the workforce; the area of challenge was not statistically significant. I supported the purpose of investigating and describing the whole child experiences of recently graduated high school students.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Findings, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this research study was to examine the perceptions of recently graduated high school students to determine if the modern educational reform movement had negatively altered classroom conditions in terms of the whole child framework. This chapter discusses the significance of the topic and study, a discussion of findings for each research question, the study's limitations implications for practice, and recommendations for future study.

Discussion

The state of the American public education system should be of concern to all citizens as a quality education continues not only to be the preeminent route to success (Spring, 2016) but also the best path toward a socially just nation (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). For these reasons, a successful education system is paramount to our success as a democracy, and improvement strategies, or reform, are commonplace. Recent attempts to federalize and centralize education through accountability and competition (Heise, 2017; Young, 2018) have been the most common improvement methods implemented. Unfortunately, student outcomes did not improve to the degree hoped (Lonsbury & Apple, 2012), and several unintended consequences now permeate the public education system (McNeal, 2012). With an understanding of the importance of a robust education system and the knowledge that the unintended consequences of reform were pervading schools and districts across the country, I became interested in further understanding how this dynamic was affecting the very students' educational reform was purportedly helping. Therefore, the purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental, comparative, and correlational study was to examine the perceptions of recently graduated public school students regarding the conditions of their educational experience within the context of the modern reform movement.

The modern reform movement, and the focus on academic achievement and accountability, led to numerous unintended consequences and were not based on theoretical research about how human beings are motivated to perform. This fact led the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development to create the whole child framework (ASCD, 2007), which was intended to influence educators and members of society to look at the goals of education more broadly and encompass the whole child socially, emotionally, and physically in addition to the cognitive focus (Lewallen et al., 2015). Fretz (2015) described how self-determination theory provided a theoretical framework for how individual needs are met, leading to increased intrinsic motivation and increased levels of performance. Unfortunately, it was argued that the modern educational reform movement did not meet the needs of students or staff and was undermining the intrinsic motivation needed to improve our educational systems (Ryan & Weinstein, 2009).

As the primary goal of our education system is to graduate students who are college, career, and citizenship ready, it was imperative for me to understand how perceptions of students' high school experiences differed based on what they were doing after graduation. It was assumed that those students who were currently furthering their education might have perceived school as more intrinsically motivating when compared to those students who did not further their education who may have a less than favorable perception of their experiences. Furthermore, I wanted to understand if male students and female students had differing perceptions of their high schools' experiences in terms of intrinsic motivation and the tenets of a whole child education.

In this study, I specifically aimed to explain the relationships among student perceptions of the whole child, self-determination theory of motivation, gender, and current postsecondary

status. I hoped to gain an understanding of whether the modern reform movement in education

created classroom conditions that hindered the whole child. To measure perceptions, I modified

three of the five whole child tenets of education published by the Association for Supervision

and Curriculum Development (ASCD, 2007). Although all five tenets are important to a well-

rounded education, I chose the three tenets that mirrored the self-determination theory of

motivation. I took the 10 components of each whole child tenet and developed student-facing

questions to create a survey. This survey was sent to recent high school graduates along with the

Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale (BPNSFS), which measures student

beliefs in intrinsic motivation. These surveys, along with demographic questions of gender and

postsecondary status, were sent to approximately 2,000 former graduates' email addresses. After

an initial email and two reminders, 103 student responses were utilized for this study. Reliability

and validity of the whole child survey, descriptive statistics of each survey, the correlation

between the two surveys, and the comparisons of the whole child survey perceptions to gender

and postsecondary status were examined.

Summary of the Findings

Research Question 1

RQ1. What is the validity and reliability of the Whole Child Student Survey?

H1. The Whole Child Student Survey will be valid and reliable.

Although the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD, 2007)

developed the whole child framework in response to the narrowing of the scope of education,

there was not a measurement tool readily available to practitioners. I created a survey to measure

the perceptions of recently graduated students in reference to a whole child education. Although

the survey tool had content validity due to replicating the whole child tenets, concurrent validity

and reliability were not known at the beginning of this study. It is significant that the questions

from the Whole Child Student Survey correlated to a moderate or high degree with the already

research-based instrument, the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale

(BPNSFS). The BPNSFS was created to determine the needs satisfaction and the frustration

levels of individuals in the three areas of self-determination theory. Autonomy, relatedness, and

competence are proven to be precursors for needs satisfaction and, therefore, intrinsic motivation

(Chen et al., 2015). The fact that each of these components had a significant correlation with the

three tenets of the whole child demonstrates evidence for concurrent validity.

In addition to validity, I found evidence of reliability of the Whole Child Student Survey

through high levels of internal consistency within the 10 questions for each tenet. Similar to the

instrument's validity, reliability is key for stakeholders to understand because students tend to

have similar perceptions for many of the questions within each tenet.

I found evidence that the Whole Child Student Survey was valid and reliable. Most

importantly, this fact now gives educators, researchers, and policy makers a valid and reliable

tool to measure the perceptions of students in relation to the three examined tenets of the whole

child.

Research Question 2

RQ2. Do recently graduated students, who were educated during the accountability

movement, believe that certain aspects of the whole child (i.e., engagement, support, and

challenge) were absent during their high school experience?

> **H1.** Recently graduated students will report that various aspects of the whole
>
> child were absent or negatively affected during their high school experience.

H2. Recently graduated students will report that engagement was more negatively affected than other aspects of the whole child.

Understanding students' perceptions of their educational environment are key to making informed decisions (Ruzek & Schenke, 2019). Research Question 2 was focused on how students perceived their educational environment in terms of the whole child. Perceptions of experiences with engagement, support, and challenge were measured, and the average scores were found to be relatively high. My hypothesis that students would not have positively perceived their whole child high school experience was unfounded. In addition, my second hypothesis, that engagement would be perceived lower, was not proven.

These findings are significant in that the students who replied were taught during the modern reform era and still perceived their educational experience to be positive in terms of engagement, support, and challenge.

Research Question 3

RQ3. Do recently graduated students, who were educated during the accountability movement, believe that certain aspects of the self-determination theory of motivation (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) were absent during their high school experience?

H1. Recently graduated students will report that various aspects of their motivation were absent or negatively affected during their high school experience.

H2. Recently graduated students will report that autonomy was more negatively affected than other aspects of their motivation.

Similar to Research Question 2, Research Question 3 was focused on how students perceived their educational environment in terms of the self-determination theory of motivation. Perceptions of experiences with autonomy, competence, and relatedness were all measured and

also scored relatively high. My hypothesis that students would not have positively perceived their high school experience in terms of the self-determination theory of motivation was unfounded. However, my second hypothesis, that autonomy would be perceived lower was accurate, but still not significant.

These findings are also important in that the students who replied were taught during the modern reform era and still perceived their educational experience to be positive in terms of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Research Question 4

RQ4. Is there a correlation between whole child tenets and self-determination theory of motivation tenets?

> **H1.** There will be a moderate to high degree of correlation between the whole
>
> child tenets and self-determination theory of motivation tenets.

The whole child framework and accompanying survey, as well as the self-determination theory of motivation and associated survey, both offer insights into students' experiences in high school. Both of these concepts have theoretical foundations that explain what students need to be successful in school. I found moderate to high correlations between the six individual tenets demonstrating how closely they are related. The most significant correlations were the three interrelated tenets of the whole child framework, all having a correlation coefficient of over .80. The interrelated tenets of the self-determination theory of motivation all had less significant correlations, but each correlation was still moderate and statistically significant.

The most significant correlation between the two models was engagement and autonomy. This correlation may be critical for helping educators and decision makers understand that there is a strong correlation between giving students autonomy over their learning and having them

engaged in their work. Researchers are clear that internal motivation leads to increased levels of

student engagement, which is then paramount to increasing achievement (Patrick et al., 2019).

Educational reform efforts that either purposefully or inadvertently limit the autonomy of

students are likely to decrease students' internal motivation and engagement, leading to a lack of

academic achievement. It remains unclear whether the efforts of the modern reform movement

are not successful because the implementation is limiting the autonomy students have in their

schooling. Similarly, if students need autonomy to be intrinsically motivated and engaged in

their schooling, I posit that the same is true for staff members. Staff turnover, burnout, and

general dissatisfaction may be attributed to a lack of autonomy for staff members due to the

modern reform movement (Ryan et al., 2017).

In addition to concurrent validity, the significance of this correlation is critical for

educators and decision makers as students who positively perceive one of these tenets are likely

to demonstrate a similar emotion in the other areas. Researchers are clear that students who are

internally motivated are more capable of success (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). With the correlation

to the Whole Child Student Survey, it would appear that students who then positively perceive

the areas of engagement, challenge, and support are more likely to have their needs satisfied and

be intrinsically motivated. It would behoove stakeholders to closely monitor students'

perceptions of these areas when making changes or when monitoring success with initiatives.

Research Question 5

RQ5. Is there a gender difference in students' whole child high school experiences?

H1. More male students will report that various aspects of their whole child

experience were absent or negatively affected.

In addition to generally understanding student perspectives about their high school experiences, it is also important to disaggregate the findings to make better decisions moving forward. For this study, the population was fairly homogenous in terms of ethnicity, so gender was the only predetermined demographic studied. My hypothesis that male students would report more negatively than their female counterparts was not supported by the results. There was no statistically significant difference in the reported perceptions of male and female students in reference to their whole child experiences in high school. The largest spread of difference in the means was only .06, and male and female students both reported fairly high perceptions of their whole child experiences in high school. Of the students who participated, assuming they were students who did have a positive experience, there was no significant difference by gender.

Research Question 6

RQ6. Is there a postsecondary status difference in students' whole child high school experiences?

> **H1.** Students who are not currently furthering their formal education will report, at a more substantial level, that various aspects of their whole child education were absent or negatively affected.
>
> **H2.** Students who are currently enrolled in a four-year institution of higher education will report the least amount of impact to the various aspects of their whole child education.

One of the most significant aspects of this study was whether or not student postsecondary options affect their perceptions of their whole child experiences in high school. Although there were five categories for students to choose from on the survey, due to limited responses, the five choices were narrowed to two: in college (four- or two-year college) or work

(trade school, military, or workforce). My hypothesis that students who were not furthering their education would report lower scores in reference to their whole child education was supported by the results. There was a significant difference in the whole child areas of engagement and support demonstrated between those students who reported being enrolled in a two- or four-year college with those who are currently in trade school, the military, or the workforce. Those students who reported being in a two- or four-year college had higher perception scores in engagement and support than their classmates currently in trade school, the military, or the workforce. The whole child tenet of challenge was not significantly different from the two groups. My second hypothesis that students currently enrolled in a four-year institution would demonstrate the highest perceptions of a whole child education could not be calculated due to limited disaggregated data.

The findings from this research question are significant in understanding the role that students' perceptions of their whole child high school experience may have in determining their future. I posit that those students who do not perceive a whole child-focused high school experience may not value continuing their education, which could lead to less earnings, financial instability, and other societal struggles. Therefore, teachers and policy makers should ensure that all students perceive their high school experience to be focused on a whole child mentality if they want students to continue into postsecondary education.

Limitations

There were some limitations to this study. The most impactful limitation lies in the assumption that the sample may not have been representative of all students' perceptions following high school. I randomly chose recently graduated students, which should be representative of the population. However, the respondents may be skewed toward those who

had positive experiences since the survey was optional and clearly stated that the goal was to help teachers and administrators improve their practice. It is possible that students who did not perceive their high school experience as positive may not have wanted to participate.

Another limitation was that the population consisted of one school district. This school district is in a very affluent community in the Western United States with a successful reputation and void of many of the struggles other school districts face, namely poverty. There was limited demographic variability that could be examined, including race, students on an individualized education plan, and students whose second language is English. For this study to truly be impactful on a large scale, the data would need to be reported in a disaggregated fashion and encompass a more diverse population.

Surveying students one to two years after they graduated may limit their perceptions and was also a potential limitation. Students may have had additional experiences following high school that could have impacted their perceptions. Students may also have had trouble accurately remembering their experiences and emotions that may have changed over time. In order for this study to be most effective, surveying current students is advised.

Finally, the sample size of the study was limited to the 103 students who completed the survey. Although the data could be extrapolated, the small sample size in reference to the invitations sent remains a limitation.

Implications for Practice

From the results of this study, the implications for practice will be impactful for students and staff. Most importantly, educational leaders and policy makers must start making more informed decisions about the strategies to improve education to address the multifaceted needs of all learners. There is little debate that education needs to continue evolving and improving to

keep pace in a global economy. The most recent strategies of accountability and centralization have not been grounded in the science of motivation (Supovitz, 2009). In order for future reform efforts to be more successful and sustainable, leaders must find ways to increase autonomy and engagement for both students and staff.

Teachers must take into account the fact that students need to have a level of choice and voice in their education if they are to be intrinsically motivated (Koenka, 2019). Teachers also need to be educated to understand that intrinsic motivation, engagement, and ultimately academic achievement are all linked. It would appear that the more autonomy given to students, the more intrinsically motivated they are and the more engaged they are in the classroom and in their education. This theory relates to staff as well, and teachers must be given autonomy in their classroom if they are to be intrinsically motivated to perform and fully engaged in their craft.

The dynamic of control, both in terms of teachers over students and the government over the education system, continues to be problematic and not grounded in research. The best way to hold people accountable is to empower them; the modern reform effort is grounded in a philosophy that the less someone performs, the more one controls and punishes them (Patrick et al., 2019). If our education system is to truly perform at the levels needed to compete globally and deliver social justice, stakeholders must empower and not control students, staff, schools, and districts.

Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers continues to be one of the most important aspects of an effective education system (Sanderse et al., 2015). The current accountability movement is making this very difficult as teachers' stress levels increased, and they experienced burnout and chose to leave the profession (Ryan et al., 2017). Teachers also reported that the narrowing of the curriculum and test-related stress limits the autonomy they have in the

classroom, which is leading to less student engagement (Elish-Piper et al., 2013). Teachers having more autonomy or voice in what is being taught would help alleviate both issues. Student-teacher relationships are important, as identified in the tenets of relatedness and support in this study; however, teachers reported that the stress of accountability affects their ability to build relationships with their students (Glazer, 2018; Ryan et al., 2017; Yoon, 2002). All of these unintended consequences of the reform era are ultimately leading to teachers leaving the profession (Sanderse et al., 2015). Without a change in how motivation science is used to improve education, a teacher shortage will be a certainty.

The recent emergence of social-emotional learning as an area of need in schools is likely related to several decades of the modern reform movement. Teachers stated that their current response to reform created difficulty forming relationships with students, which is leading to an inability to support the social and emotional learning of their students (Jeon et al., 2019). This fact is seen in a reduction of skills not tested, such as character education and health and safety (Slade & Griffith, 2013). Well-rounded activities like field trips and recess have also been reduced, causing more pressure on students and fewer outlets for their stress (Berliner, 2011). It is well-known that within the current era of accountability, students are experiencing levels of stress and anxiety that are not healthy (Brewer, 2017). A final component demonstrating the resurgence of social and emotional learning lies in the lack of autonomy and fun that students experience in the classroom, which helps them build relationships with each other and with their teachers (Diamond, 2010).

Students will most likely need different and expanding skills to be successful in the future. However, the current narrowing of the curriculum is leaving little time for critical thinking and creativity (Stotsky, 2016). The arts and areas in the humanities, such as social

studies, are also being left out, as they are not federally tested to the same degree as other areas. Most experts agree that these areas help produce crucial skills for successful and well-rounded children (Berliner, 2011). As teachers struggle to cover all the information that is on mandated tests, it is also known that personalization of instruction is not occurring, and many students are not getting individualized attention (Elish-Piper et al., 2013). Higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving skills, which experts agree will be needed in the jobs of the future, are also not often integrated into a reform-minded curriculum (Erskine, 2014; O'Connor & McTaggart, 2017). As students graduate into a world with a global economy, educators must focus on 21st-century skills (communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity) if they are to be competitive, and the modern reform movement is making that very difficult.

The goal of the modern educational reform movement, as was the goal for all reform movements in the past, was to keep America's democracy strong and create a more equitable country (Iaocb & Groza, 2019; Parkerson & Parkerson, 2001). Unfortunately, the strategies of control and accountability that did not coincide with research on motivation may result in the opposite outcome. Not teaching the critical skills of the global economy will make our students less competitive, even if they can pass a standardized reading or math test. The modern reform effort has also done little to improve equity, and it is our most marginalized students who attend the schools that appear to be most affected by reform (Stotsky, 2016). Future reformers must start using the research and the science of motivation and human behavior if stakeholders are ever to improve education. Focusing on the tenets of the whole child and the self-determination theory of motivation is a great start to implementing strategies that will promote the skills and dispositions needed for the 21st-century global workforce.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study could be replicated with additional demographic groups. Although differences by gender were not significant, I suggest that studying differences by race, special education, English language learners, and students who are on free or reduced lunch would be beneficial to understand students' experiences further. Surveying students who are still enrolled in high school would be advantageous, and having historical or longitudinal data could demonstrate changes over time. Reporting on data by teacher, grade, academic content area, school, and district could be beneficial for future researchers. Using this data in concert with attendance and discipline data may offer insights into how to help students be more successful in their studies. Merging this information with data on grades and standardized test scores may help identify root causes for students' academic achievement. Finally, taking a more in-depth look at the relationship students' perceptions have with their postsecondary path could add to the body of research on postsecondary readiness.

Conclusion

Although a majority of students in this study rated their high school experience favorably, there was a significant difference in how students who are currently furthering their education perceived high school versus those who are in the workforce. Additionally, the self-determination theory of motivation tenet of autonomy correlated strongly with the whole child tenet of engagement, adding validity to the research that demonstrated a connection between autonomy, intrinsic motivation, engagement, and ultimately achievement.

The future of our country's democracy could depend heavily on the future success of our public education system. For this reason, it is imperative that the research literature is used to inform future reform efforts. Valid and reliable surveys like the Whole Child Student Survey

offer an opportunity to measure students' perceptions about their school experiences.

Understanding student perceptions could offer information as to why students choose certain

postsecondary paths, and understanding demographic differences to student perceptions is also of

value. Future researchers have the tools needed to amplify the voice of students and teachers, and

leaders and policy makers must listen if they want to change the current trajectory of modern

reform efforts.

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Appendix A: Whole Child Student Survey

Whole Child Student Survey

Below, I want to measure what specific feelings you experienced during high school. You can assign a score from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*) to indicate to what extent a certain feeling applies to your experience in high school.

Each student is actively *engaged* in learning and is connected to the school and the broader community.

Please rate the statements against the following scale:

1 – *strongly disagree*   2 – *disagree*   3 – *agree*   4 – *strongly agree*

1. My high school teachers used active learning strategies, such as cooperative learning and project-based learning.
2. My high school offered a range of opportunities for me to contribute to and learn within the community at large, including service learning, internships, apprenticeships, and volunteer projects.
3. My high school policies and climate reinforced citizenship and civic behaviors by students, family members, and staff and included meaningful participation in decision-making.
4. My high school used curriculum-related experiences such as field trips and outreach projects to complement and extend my curriculum and instruction.
5. In my high school, I had access to a range of options and choices for a wide array of extracurricular and cocurricular activities that reflected my interests, goals, and learning profiles.
6. My high school's curriculum and instruction promoted my understanding of the real-world, global relevance, and application of learned content.
7. My high school teachers used a range of inquiry-based, experiential learning tasks and activities to help me deepen my understanding of what I learned and why I learned it.
8. My high school's staff worked closely with me to help me monitor and direct my own progress.
9. My high school expected and prepared me to assume age-appropriate responsibility for learning through effective decision-making, goal setting, and time management.
10. My high school supported, promoted, and reinforced responsible environmental habits through recycling, trash management, sustainable energy, and other efforts.

Each student has access to personalized learning and is *supported* by qualified, caring adults.

Please rate the statements against the following scale:

1 – *strongly disagree*   2 – *disagree*   3 – *agree*   4 – *strongly agree*

1. My high school personalized my learning, including the flexible use of time and scheduling to meet my academic and social goals.
2. My high school teachers used a range of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment tasks to monitor my progress, provide timely feedback, and adjust teaching-learning activities to maximize my progress.
3. My high school ensured that adult-student relationships supported and encouraged my academic and personal growth.
4. I had access to school counselors and other structured academic, social, and emotional support systems.
5. My high school staff understood and made curricular, instructional, and school improvement decisions based on my development and student performance information.
6. My high school personnel welcomed and included my family, and significant members of my school community, as partners in my education.
7. My high school used a variety of methods across languages and cultures to communicate with my family and my community about the school's vision, mission, goals, activities, and opportunities for me.
8. My high school helped my family understand available services, advocate for my needs, and support my learning.
9. Every member of my high school's staff was well qualified and properly credentialed.
10. All adults whom I interacted with, both within the school and through extracurricular, cocurricular, and community-based experiences, taught and modeled prosocial behavior.

Each student is *challenged* academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment.

Please rate the statements against the following scale:

1 – *strongly disagree*   2 – *disagree*   3 – *agree*   4 – *strongly agree*

1. In my high school, I had access to challenging, comprehensive curriculum in all content areas.
2. The curriculum and instruction in my high school provided opportunities for me to develop critical thinking and reasoning skills, problem-solving competencies, and technology proficiency.
3. My high school collected and used qualitative (observed) and quantitative (scores) data to support my academic and personal growth.
4. The curriculum, instruction, and assessment of my high school demonstrated high expectations for me as a student.
5. My high school worked with my family to help us understand the connection between education and lifelong success.
6. The curriculum and instruction in my high school included evidence-based strategies to prepare me for further education, career, and citizenship.
7. The extracurricular, cocurricular, and community-based programs at my high school provided me with experiences relevant to higher education, career, and citizenship.
8. The curriculum and instruction in my high school developed my global awareness and competencies, including the understanding of language and culture.
9. My high school monitored and assessed my extracurricular, cocurricular, and community-based experiences to ensure my academic and personal growth.
10. My high school provided cross-curricular opportunities for learning with and through technology.

Demographic Questions

1. What gender do you identify as?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Other (specify)

2. Postsecondary status?
   a. In a four-year college
   b. In a two-year college
   c. In trade school
   d. In the military
   e. In the workforce

Appendix B: Self-Determination Theory of Motivation Survey

Self-Determination Theory Questions

Below, I want to measure what specific feelings you experienced during high school. You can assign a score from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*) to indicate to what extent a certain feeling applies to that moment in your life.

Please rate the statements against the following scale:

1 – *strongly disagree*   2 – *disagree*   3 – *agree*   4 – *strongly agree*

1. I had a sense of choice and freedom in things in class that I undertook.

2. Most of the things I did at school felt like "I had to."

3. I felt excluded from the group of fellow students where I wanted to belong.

4. I was confident that I could do things well at school.

5. I felt that my decisions reflected what I really wanted.

6. In class, I felt compelled to do things I would not choose for myself.

7. I felt connected to my friends at school.

8. I felt that my teachers and fellow students were cold and aloof with me.

9. I felt disappointed in my academic achievements.

10. I had a warm feeling with the students and teachers with whom I spent time.

11. I felt insecure about my skills.

12. I felt competent in what I did at school.

Appendix C: Institutional Review Board Approval

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

March 15, 2021

Edward (Ted) Knight
Department of Graduate and Professional Studies
Abilene Christian University

Dear Ted,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled
"Student Perceptions of the Effects of the Modern Educational Reform Movement on the Concept of the Whole Child",

(IRB# 21-030   )is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs