A CASE STUDY OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISION EMBEDDED IN THE

EVALUATION PROCESS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES SCHOOLS

by

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(Under the Direction of Sally J. Zepeda)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this interpretive qualitative study was to investigate the principal evaluation processes and supervisory practices that cluster managers (evaluators) and principals follow throughout the academic year. It examined the perspectives of principals and cluster managers on the principal evaluation practices and nature of supervision provided to boost learning. This qualitative study was framed within the research methodology of a case study and situated in the context of the Al-Ain school district, which is supervised by the Abu Dhabi Education Council. Additionally, the research relied on several data collection methods, including interviews, documents (artifacts), and field notes. Nine participants (six principals and three cluster managers) were recruited to participate in semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. Given the nature of the multi-case study design, the researcher conducted both within-case and cross-case analyses, employing the constant comparative method to capture similarities and differences across the data, find links between segments, and identify emerging themes.

The findings of the cross-case analysis yielded 10 themes that were consistent among the principals participating in the study: (1) Cluster managers cause inequality in

the evaluation process; (2) Evaluation criteria: Aligned, yet unclear, universal, and impractical; (3) Insufficient focus on instructional leadership; (4) Inconsistent supervisory approaches; (5) Cluster managers hinder learning during the evaluation process; (6) Exceptional cluster managers promoting learning and development; (7) Fragmented and unfocused professional development; (8) Ineffective feedback during the evaluation process; (9) Emerging tensions at the summative evaluation; and (10) Lack of incentive and punitive measures in principal evaluations. These findings support the major trends of the practices associated with principal evaluation and supervision.

The results of this study provided a deeper understanding of the components included in the United Arab Emirates' principal evaluation processes and the nature of supervision implemented from various points-of-view. The data enriched the body of educational leadership literature and suggested implications for the refinement and redesign of evaluation systems to improve principal practices, support their professional learning and growth, and offer insights into how practices might be adapted to meet their individual needs.

INDEX WORDS: Principal evaluation process; Principal supervision; Principal
                professional learning; Formative evaluation; Summative
                evaluation; Cross-case analysis; Case study

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Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2019

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DEDICATION

With deep gratitude, I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved family and closest friends—without your endless support and giving, it would have been unreachable.

To my sweet parents and siblings—the biggest fans and believers—who have fully understood the importance of this piece and have been considerate of my lengthy absence by not giving me a hard time when I dropped off the grid for months, and sometimes years. Rather, they continually supported me in every step toward fulfilling this honorable degree.

To my wife Suhair who is fully committed and devoted to providing motherly nurturing and care to my children with unconditional love and passion regardless of my absence. I will always remember your heroism in withstanding hardships and battling adversity alone, in a time when you needed me the most. I admire your patience, strength, and continued support. I promised to make it up to you, and for the years of growing I missed with our children Sara, Sultan, and Hamad.

To my soul brother Sultan whose presence was imprinted in this journey, whose nonstop encouragement to accomplish this dream was continuous. His countless actions were beyond words to describe, not only in this journey but also throughout my entire life. Your hugs before each departure and after each arrival was a silent cry from inside you, but I felt them, every one of them. With happiness, I am forever indebted to you.

To my closest friends, Juma, Ali, Shabir, Yousef, Fahad, Mazen, and Mohammed. Thank you for your emotional support, your unforgettable visits, and cherished

adventurous times we spent together while I was in the U.S. Your existence lessens the

pressure and pushes me forward. All of you—thank you! This seemingly-long academic

endeavor would have never harvested without you being in my world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Harvey Mackay says, "None of us got to where we are alone. Whether the assistance we received was obvious or subtle, acknowledging someone's help is a big part of understanding the importance of saying thank you." The conditions of completing this dissertation would not have met without the continued support, guidance, and supervision of many individuals throughout the process.

First and foremost, my deepest gratitude and thanks to Allah, the most beneficent and merciful, who furnishes me with resources to complete this work. I would also like to acknowledge my major professor Dr. Sally J. Zepeda—the mother, the teacher, and the friend, who promised me in the first meeting with her to make me into a "rock star," to better serve my home country, the United Arab Emirates. I will never forget our memorable moments, as when you shared stories, experiences, and advice on our drive to schools and back to Athens every Thursday. Remarkably, you served as a beacon during the stormiest of times, attentively supporting me for advancement in my academia regardless of your health, and fighting for me no matter what to ensure my accomplishment. You believed in me and counted me in with many of your important projects, and you took time to celebrate every success, no matter how big or small, and that built my confidence and made it easier to keep pushing forward to reach my large-scale goals. My words will never adequately be able to describe how much you have done for me. I am greatly blessed to learn from you and hope to be your worthy successor following in your footsteps.

Dr. John Dayton and Dr. Juanita Johnson-Bailey—your commitment has been so precious, and I am fully aware that it is not always convenient to agree to serving on a committee. I am profoundly grateful for all of your undertakings in providing challenging questions and timely, consistent feedback that has been invaluable in shaping my research study. Thank you for the energy and the time you invested over the past years to ensure the success of this dissertation.

I also want to extend my acknowledgement to the participants involved in this work. Six principals and three cluster managers voluntarily gave their time to enrich the targeted topic with enthusiasm and excitement.

Thank you all!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Scholars and educators around the globe have come to agree that the quality of school principals matters. At the 2012 International Summit on the Teaching Profession in New York City, ministers of education and teacher union leaders from 23 high-performing countries espoused the belief that "leadership with a purpose" is key to increasing student achievement (Asia Society, 2012, p. 19). Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) highlighted, effective principals have an enormous impact on school improvement, teacher quality, and the efficacy of school relationships.

Mendro (1998) also shared that "the quickest way to change the effectiveness of a school, for better or worse, is to change the principal" (pp. 263–264). Furthermore, factors such as recruiting, hiring, developing, and retaining principals are central to schools' success (Stronge, 2013a). Moreover, unless educators establish carefully designed evaluation systems capable of differentiating performance with unerring accuracy, they cannot begin to improve principal quality or to address leadership succession (Parylo, Zepeda, & Bengtson, 2012; Zepeda, Parylo, & Bengtson, 2014).

To achieve the goal of having productive evaluation systems for school leaders and teachers, recent federal grant programs in the United States, such as the School Improvement Grant (SIG) and Race to the Top (RTT), have spurred states with massive incentives. Between 2009 and 2012 alone, the United States Congress allocated more than $4.35 billion to the Race to the Top (RTTT) programs with specific intent to support

states and school systems in the design, development, and implementation of programs and processes that best contribute to evaluating teachers and school leaders. As a result, many states have begun using improved measures in their evaluation systems, including advances in student growth rates and changes in school learning climate (Clifford & Ross 2011a; Fuller, Hollingworth, & Liu, 2015).

In similar fashion, the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (where this study was conducted) established an evaluation system with the specific intent of not only assessing principals' performance in relation to professional standards, but also for providing continued professional development (ADEC, n.d.-a). The professional standards are composed of five areas that represent the roles of the principal, namely leading strategically, guiding teaching and learning, presiding over the respective organization, and showing leadership among people within the organization and the community (ADEC, n.d.-b). Additionally, cluster managers who evaluate principals, are tasked with the responsibility of coaching, supervising, and evaluating school principals throughout the academic year.

Changes in leadership responsibilities in both the United States and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi have resulted in drastic shifts in the role of the principal to focus more on instructional leadership. In this regard, research has indicated that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Witziers, Bosner, & Kruger, 2003). In addition, school leaders have the potential to unleash latent capacities in their schools through their direct influence on many factors that contribute to student learning, including school climate, teacher performance, and instructional quality (Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010).

School leaders are no longer solely dedicated to managerial tasks; they lead change, and they are key drivers behind many aspects of school improvement. In fact, school principals are now committed to a wider variety of roles than in the past, from supervisors and instructional leaders, to fund-raisers, visionaries, community mediators, data analysts, and change agents (Zepeda, 2013).

Despite how overwhelming the job description of principal may sound, it signals that the field has begun to give long-overdue attention to the critical role of principal (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). According to Fullan (2010), various case studies of many successful principals brought to light six characteristics of principals as instructional leaders: being change-savvy; participating as a learner; placing emphasis on instruction; developing and improving individuals; engaging in the network and system; and acknowledging moral purpose.

Stufflebeam and Nevo (1993) suggest the need for sound principal evaluations that can eliminate poor school leadership and that can assist competent principals in shaping their professional growth as instructional leaders. Principal evaluations are widely perceived as a method that gauges the instructional effect that principals have on student outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). In addition, providing a sound, reliable, and effective evaluation system can help principals identify areas in need of improvement and enable them to make informed decisions pertaining to their professional development—thus bridging the gap between their current practices and desired performance (Stronge, 2013b).

Nevertheless, the full benefits of effective and sound principal evaluations cannot be fully attained without reliable, knowledgeable, and dedicated supervisors who are

genuinely committed to helping principals to learn throughout the evaluation process (Goldring et al., 2018; Zepeda & Lanoue, 2017). Kimball, Milanowski, and McKinney (2009) found in their study that the principal evaluation system required more than just complying with professional standards, instruments, and rubrics; rather, it warranted the supervisor-principal pairing of dynamics and dialogue that worked to fulfill the objectives of evaluation and supervision.

In the recent past, the absence of standards for measuring principal supervisors' work made it difficult to gauge success individually and collectively (Gill, 2013). However, the absence of standards has been technically overhauled, specifically in December 2015 when the Council of Chief State School Officer (CCSCO) released the national standards for principal supervisors—crafted, developed, and refined by the Wallace Foundation organization and a team of professional educators across the nation (CCSSO, 2015).

The standards provided a clear image and guidelines for principal supervisor knowledge and performance ability, emphatically transforming the work's focus from bureaucratic compliance to supporting school instructional leadership. In doing so, the principal supervisor professional standards reflect the new definition of principal work found in the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015—building a partnership between the central office, schools, and the growing leadership capacity of district leaders (CCSSO, 2015).

Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) affirmed that the creation of a role is not enough; instead, the entire system must contribute to successfully and appropriately transform new focus on teaching and learning. Since the creation of standards, a literature review

surfaced very little research that examines the effectiveness and their applications to leader evaluation (Stringer, 2017).

Problem Statement

Although states and districts require principal evaluation systems, research suggests that compliance with the law does not necessarily ascertain that quality performance evaluations are in place (Goldring et al., 2009). Recent studies in the United States and other countries revealed that deficiencies present in most principal evaluation systems. These deficiencies include incongruent understanding among principals and their evaluators pertaining perceived expectations, evaluation purposes, processes, and outcomes (Goldring et al., 2009; Thomas, Holdaway, & Ward, 2000), the use of unreliable instruments to evaluate principals (Fuller et al., 2015; Goldring et al., 2009), the misalignment of evaluation components with the practices that principals perform (Abu Risq, 2012; Catano & Stronge, 2007; Davis, Kearney, Sanders, Thomas, & Leon, 2011; Goldring et al., 2009; Hvidston, McKim, & Mette, 2016; Yavuz, 2010), the mismatching of professional learning and the processes, procedures, and components of principal evaluation (Zepeda, Lanoue, Price, & Jimenez, 2014), and the tensions that surface when coherence across leader evaluation and supervision are misaligned (Zepeda, Lanoue, Creel, & Price, 2016).

Other flaws associated with principal evaluation processes include the lack of adequate training programs focused on principal supervision and evaluation for principal supervisors to expand their capacity and skills in supporting school leaders (Casserly, Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, & Palacios, 2013; Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig, 2012), the delivery of unclear feedback, and the time constraints effecting their ability to supervise

principals in ways that support growth and development (Fontana, 1994; Green, 2004; Lashway, 2003; Normore, 2004; Portin, Feldman, & Knapp, 2006; Zepeda & Lanoue, 2017).

Furthermore, supervisors who do not regularly dedicate adequate time to visiting and assessing the performance of principals risk jeopardizing the progress of schools and school districts (Honig, 2012; Lashway, 2003). Pointedly, if principal supervisors cannot effectively measure the performance of principals, chances are low that they will be able to identify significant deficiencies in principal practices that lead to school improvement. If such insufficiencies are not being addressed, there is little chance that principals can improve their performance or fortify their schools (Green, 2004).

However, while the literature is replete with teacher evaluation studies, research on the leadership evaluation process has received far less attention (Davis et al., 2011; Goldring et al., 2009; Zepeda et al., 2014; Zepeda et al., 2016), with no such research in the UAE. This study fills a gap because the UAE recently begun establishing foundations for education with no accumulative research covering the topic of principal supervision and evaluation. The practices about evaluative process and supervision established by the ADEC needs rigorous assessment and investigation to gauge its effectiveness in promoting professional learning that is associated with what principals do.

This study responds to the existing need to examine the current principal evaluation practices and the supervisory approaches implemented in the UAE. During this process, considerable attention focuses on the lens of developmental supervision (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2017), with reliance on adult learning theory (Conlan, Grabowski, & Smith, 2003; Knowles, 1984; Langer & Applebee, 1986) because

evaluation should be a developmental process designed to promote principal learning and growth (Parylo et al., 2012). This research is needed because emirate principals and cluster managers are critical players in the success and effectiveness of their schools. In fact, their perceptions should aid in examining the current implementation of the principal evaluation process and supervision.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the principal evaluation processes and supervisory practices that cluster managers (evaluators) and principals follow throughout the academic year. The three major aspects of this topic targeted the principal evaluation process provided for current administrators; supervision as means for supporting and improving school leaders; and the extent of learning and growth as manifested in the evaluative supervisory processes and practices. Drawing from these, the primary goals of this study was to examine the practices of the principle evaluation process within the city of Al-Ain, analyze the selected supervisory approaches in supporting and growing current principals and to examine the degree to which the evaluation and supervision processes promote adult learning.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. How is the principal evaluation process conducted as described and experienced by public school principals in Al-Ain city?

2. What are the supervisory approaches selected by cluster managers in the principal evaluation process?

3. In what ways do the supervisory approaches employed by cluster managers help principals sustain growth and development?

Interpretive and Conceptual Framework

This study was framed within the interpretive framework of constructivism, which rests on the notion that individuals gain insights by exploring the richness, depth, and complexity of a given phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Constructivism veers away from predetermined frameworks and adopts a more flexible research style capable of capturing varied meanings in human interaction to allow the researcher and participants to make sense of what is perceived as reality (Black, 2006). In addition, the epistemology of constructivism is constructed socially, not objectively (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hirschman, 1985). As a result, the participants of this study (including the researcher) are interdependent and reciprocally interactive throughout the research process, as Hudson and Ozanne (1988) advocated.

The conceptual framework of this study draws from developmental supervision (Glickman et al., 2017; Zepeda, 2017), differentiated supervision (Glatthorn, 1990), and adult learning theories (Conlan et al., 2003; Knowles, 1984; Langer & Applebee, 1986). In the field of education, developmental supervision has been most extensively researched as it has pertained to teachers (Glickman et al., 2017; Siens & Ebmeier, 1996); however, Zepeda et al. (2014) and Zepeda et al. (2016) applied the precepts of developmental supervision to leader evaluation. Developmental supervision is a practice that is less concerned with immediate behavioral changes and more so with prompting critical inquiry and reflection as a precursor to evaluation. Characteristics critical to developmental supervision include focusing on improvement and reflection, providing

ongoing feedback, using a formative rather than a summative approach, and establishing trust between the supervisor and supervisee (Hopkins & Moore, 1995; Zepeda, 2017).

Developmental supervision seeks to assist with professional growth more than traditional summative evaluation (McGill, 1991). However, educators have witnessed a tug-of-war relationship between the formative and summative aspects linked to supervision and evaluation (Zepeda, 2017). With evidence from the literature, Zepeda (2016) argues that when evaluators provide formative assessment and then shift gears to deliver summative judgment on the supervisee's performance, potential risks—such as role conflict, corroding trust, and sending mixed messages—can be anticipated. However, to avoid such undesirable outcomes, Popham (2013) suggested that supervisors should widely engage in both formative and summative evaluation, but to do so separately. In other words, by embedding formative intents into day-to-day practice and holding them as pathways toward arriving at the summative point of a given evaluation, leaders can not only detect those who may be underperforming, but they can also determine a professional development plan to ensure that quality decisions and actions are employed in ways that promote growth (Zepeda, 2016).

Research Design

The reason behind choosing qualitative inquiry for this study is mirrored by the research questions and the study's purpose: to investigate the principal evaluation processes and supervisory practices that cluster managers (evaluators) and principals follow throughout the academic year. Qualitative inquiry has the potential to answer research questions that seek to answer 'what,' 'why,' and 'how' (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014). In addition, according to Patton (2015), qualitative inquiry

provides an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by deeply looking into the sense they make about their social and material circumstances, experiences, perspectives, and histories. Qualitative methods were appropriate to use because this study sought to understand what Al-Ain school principals think about their current practices in relation to the evaluation process, the type of supervisory approaches selected by cluster managers, and whether they promote sustained growth in accordance to the principles of adult learning. The responses of principals and cluster managers will detail descriptions of the phenomenon being investigated (Ritchie et al., 2014).

This qualitative study was broadly framed within the research design of a case study (Merriam, 1998; Simon, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014) and situated in the context of Al-Ain school district, which is supervised by ADEC. The primary purpose in choosing a case study methodology was because of its ability to facilitate exploration of specific phenomena within its context by using multiple data sources to ensure that the issues are not being examined through just one lens (Merriam, 1998). The case-study design helped the researcher gain a deeper understanding of principal evaluation and supervision. Along those lines, Yin (2014) indicated that case studies offer the advantage of addressing how or why investigators are "being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control" (p. 9).

Case studies enable researchers to closely examine data within a specific context; and it is deemed appropriate because it helps people understand individuals, processes of events, project flows, programs, and characteristics that focus on specific issues (Stake, 1995). Essentially, the type of case study design selected for this study was a multi-case

design that enables the researcher to closely examine multiple cases within a single context. Herriott and Firestone (1983) pointed out the evidence gleaned from multiple cases is often more compelling and powerful than focusing on a single case, rendering the overall quality of the study more robust.

The incorporation of a multi-case design is powerful, resulting in acquiring empirically rich, and holistic information regarding a specific phenomenon (Yin, 2014). In particular, the design is intrinsic in nature, with significant emphasis given to exploring and describing the particulars of the case, instead of building a theory or making generalizations (Stake, 2010). This study relied on several data collection methods, namely face-to-face interviews, document (artifacts), field notes for triangulation and data saturation purposes (Hakim, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014).

Essential step to solid case study research lies in delimiting the object of the study; thus, a case and its units of analysis were identified (Merriam, 1998). According to Yin (2014), the tentative definition of the case and the unit of analysis are closely related to the construction of the research questions. With that as purpose, each case of the multi-case design was defined as a school principal or cluster manager with a total number of nine cases (six principals and three cluster managers). The unit of analysis were focused on the supervisory and evaluative practices in which each case experienced during the principal evaluation process.

In addition to defining the case and unit of analysis, within-case and cross-case analyses were employed in this study to examine collected data. First, a within-case analysis was used to illuminate the in-depth exploration of each case as a stand-alone entity. Then, a cross-case analysis was used to examine and refine themes, similarities,

and differences across all cases (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2015; Stake, 2006). Eventually, this combination revealed the breadth and depth of information generated both individually and collectively to bring a clear-cut image of how the principal evaluation process was conducted and experienced as described by school principals and cluster managers.

Significance of the Study

This research will provide its readers with a holistic view of the process of evaluating principals as administered by cluster managers in Al-Ain. In doing so, the results of the study might be able to guide them in approaching their evaluation processes in a manner that provides an opportunity for principals as well as cluster managers to learn and change their professional practices to reach the goal of educating students. Studying the current situation will bring a deeper understanding of the components included in the evaluation process and nature of supervision implemented in the process to shape the leadership practices of principals.

Moreover, this research provides invaluable information to inform leaders about how to use the process as a dynamic means of supervising school principals to sustain growth and development. Therefore, the results of such a study might help in the refinement and design of evaluation systems that improve principal practices, support their professional growth, and offer insights on how practices might be differentiated to meet individual needs. A review of educational literature and research in the UAE yielded no studies available for consultation.

The paucity of research calls for examination centering on the supervision and evaluation of principals in the UAE. Such a study, which investigates the implementation

of the principal evaluation and supervision process, is important for understanding principal development. Likewise, this study could potentially provide insights into the effectiveness of the evaluative process and supervision and its subsequent correlation to adult learning.

Definition of Terms

The main terms within the context of this study are presented to help the reader understand the meanings as they are used in the research:

Artifact – Something a principal creates or gathers (PowerPoint, notes, newsletter, agenda, etc.) (Stronge, 2013a).

ADEC – The Abu Dhabi Education Council is the leading body for education in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Regardless of the collaborative work with the UAE Ministry of Education, the ADEC exerts full power over the operation of schools in Abu Dhabi (Bond, 2013).

Cycles – Schools in the UAE are divided into various cycles, including KG1/KG2, which serve students from ages three to six. The term cycle is officially used in place of "school level" in the UAE. Cycle I (primary level) serves students from grades one to five, usually at gender-segregated sites. Nonetheless, some newer schools serve Cycle I students at mixed-gender sites. Next, Cycle II (middle level) serves students from grades six to nine at gender-segregated sites. Finally, Cycle III (high school level) serves students from grades 10 to 12 at gender-segregated sites, and at most geographically remote school sites, students are served in multiple cycles within a single-gender-segregated school (Bond, 2013).

Evidence – Documents that demonstrate or confirm the work of the person being evaluated and support the rating on a given element (Stronge, 2013a).

Principal evaluation – A comprehensive and formal process conducted to inform the district and the principal with information about the principal's job performance. Typically, a principal evaluation is a written document annually given to the principal to provide information as it pertains to his or her current quality of performance in a set of predetermined criteria that contribute to an overall performance rating. The evaluation is used to measure a principal's competency (Stronge, 2013a).

Cluster Managers – Cluster managers are educators hired by ADEC whose main responsibilities are to coach and evaluate school principals and vice principals based on ADEC standards (ADEC, 2013). These employees are typically assigned 10 to 15 geographically clustered school sites, most of whom have experienced living and working in a foreign culture (Bond, 2013).

School Principal – The principal is responsible for implementing the instructional programs and maintaining the operations within the school building (ADEC, n.d.-c).

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is the sample size of only six principals and three cluster managers. As a result, the data gathered may not be generalizable with regard to the principal evaluation process and supervision in the UAE. Nevertheless, while generalizability may not be possible, some transferability to other districts or Emirates could exist given the commonality of practices across the Emirates. In an attempt to ensure accuracy and reduce limitations and biases in the study, the data collection and analysis were orchestrated in line with qualitative research guidelines. Throughout the

study, trustworthiness was maintained by a triangulation of data sources, member-checks, a journal of case study notes, and a reflexivity journal to bolster the reliability of the study (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014).

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter One provides a brief overview of the study, rationale for the study, statement of purpose, subsequent research questions, the significance of the study, research design, definitions of important terms, and an overview of limitations. Then, Chapter Two illuminates the reader with critical theories central to supervisory and evaluative practices, informative contextual data, and an examination of globally-related studies. Next, Chapter Three presents the research design and methodology, including research questions, interpretive framework, rationale, data collection procedures, and data analysis approaches. In addition, trustworthiness, ethics, validity, and reliability measures are also presented.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the within-case analysis, where each participant case was explored in-depth as a stand-alone entity. Subsequently, Chapter Five unfolds the cross-case analysis, where the emergent codes and categories form each case were examined to capture common patterns within the overall data. Finally, Chapter Six presents a discussion of the findings and includes important elements, such as recommendations and implications for research, policy, and practice.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to investigate the principal evaluation processes and supervisory practices that cluster managers (evaluators) and principals follow throughout the academic year. This study was guided through the following research questions:

1. How is the principal evaluation process conducted as described and experienced by public school principals in Al-Ain city?

2. What are the supervisory approaches selected by cluster managers in the principal evaluation process?

3. In what ways do the supervisory approaches employed by cluster managers help principals sustain growth and development?

This review of the literature is divided into four sections and includes the need for supervision and evaluation for school principals. Next, the theories underpinning principal supervision and evaluation practices are examined. These first two sections familiarize readers with essential information pertaining to the importance of principal supervision and evaluation for leadership and the vital theories that are effective when incorporated into evaluative processes and supervisory practices.

Next, principal supervision and evaluation in the United Arab Emirates is examined and then the next section examines the empirical studies related to principal supervision and evaluation in the United States and other countries. Although this study

was conducted in the district of Al-Ain, UAE, the majority of the discussion is derived largely from the literature from the United States and other countries around the globe. With the UAE's only recently establishing foundations for education, there is no cumulative research covering the topic of principal supervision and evaluation. The deficiency of UAE specific data necessitated incorporation of current global literature.

The Need for Supervision and Evaluation for School Principals

The discussion about the need of supervision and evaluation for school principals begins with an examination of the primacy of the work of principals. It also includes an in-depth examination of principal supervision and evaluation practices.

The Primacy of the Work of the Principals

"Effective schools are the result of the activities of effective principals" (Ubben & Hughes, 1987, p. 3). Indeed, the principal is the vital component most likely to make changes and have influence within the school parameter (Fullan, 2007; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987; Manasse, 1985; Sarason, 1971; Stedman, 1987). This discovery can be traced back to 1983 when a report entitled 'A Nation at Risk,' was issued by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The report clearly reflected that principals were at the forefront of school development—explicitly responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of schools in many dimensions, such as school climate, responsiveness, curriculum, personnel, and any other challenges facing the school (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1981).

Legislative initiatives such as the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, and the Race to the Top (RTTT) program in 2009—each highlighting performance of educator evaluation and accountability measures—created substantial changes to the

roles and responsibilities of leadership. NCLB illuminated the federal government's notion toward the importance of school leadership through its commitment and responsibility to hold school officials (i.e., principals) accountable for student achievement by conducting a series of corrective action and/or restructuring requirements (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014). Along similar lines, NCLB specified certain mandates for measuring student achievement. It tied receipt of Title I funds to adequate yearly progress (AYP), where failure to meet AYP as measured by testing mandates, initiated government control of schools.

RTTT called for weighty changes in public education including change in the criteria, processes, and structures of principal evaluation. The United States Secretary of Education outlined new and unprecedented guidelines to school districts and departments of education pertaining to teacher and principal evaluation through a competitive $4.35 billion RTTT federal grant program.

States were required to eradicate regulatory barriers and consider student achievement data as part of the principal evaluation system (Clifford & Ross, 2011b). In the RTTT initiative, the Department of Education gauged the effectiveness of a principal on the basis of student achievement performance, where an "effective principal" is defined as one "whose students, overall and for each subgroup, achieve acceptable rates (e.g., at least one grade level for one academic year) of student growth" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 12).

There were three consecutive phases for RTTT: states granted award funding in phases one and two received monetary compensation in 2010, while states awarded funding in phase three received their monetary compensation in 2011. When applying for

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the third phase of RTTT funding, states had to clearly specify a new and relevant principal evaluation system that incorporated student achievement in the evaluation component. The NCLB and RTTT initiatives were key drivers for change on the foundations, roles, and power of school principals.

In today's climate of demanding and heightened expectations, principals are expected to lead schools and perform the following themes in action—to think as visionaries, to lead as instructional and curricular leaders, to evaluate as critical supervisors, to help as facility managers, and to support as respectful enforcers of policy mandates and initiatives (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013). The most salient trend in these changes was the transition of school principals from building mangers to a new position—an instructional leader (Catano & Stronge, 2007; Cheung & Walker, 2006; Goodwin, Cunningham, & Childress, 2003; Hallinger, 2011; Whitaker, 2003).

Zepeda (2013) defined instructional leadership this way—elusive in nature, largely influenced by the specific context of the school, the characteristics of stakeholders involved in the process (administrators, teachers, students, etc.), the school climate, the confluence of culture and norms prevalent in the school, the communication patterns, and the deep-rooted values and beliefs that embody the school.

In addition, the responsibilities of principals are not only becoming more important, but also simultaneously changing to correspond to the needs of the era (State Board for Educator Certification, 1999). The need for omnipresent, effective leadership among schools is therefore touted as a critical factor capable of meeting the increased

demands of high-stakes testing for students and increased expectations specified in educational reforms to improve and advance the American educational system.

However, maintaining and nurturing leadership quality requires that principals have certain skills and support to establish an environment that stimulates teaching and learning improvement because behaviors associated with instructional leadership impact student achievement (Hattie, 2008). A small but deeply growing body of research supports the notion that principals influence student achievement (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2012; Coelli & Green, 2012; Grissom, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2015), and that principals leading with fidelity and strong commitment can influence student achievement in a variety of ways (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Murphy, 2005; Neuman & Simmons, 2000).

Sponsoring research on school leadership, The Wallace Foundation (2011) found a noteworthy discovery of empirical linkage between school leadership and student achievement. The Foundation expounded:

Research [on education] shows that most school variables, considered separately, have at most small effects on learning. The real payoff comes when individual variables combine to reach critical mass. Creating the conditions under which that can occur is the job of the principal. (The Wallace Foundation, 2011, p. 2)

Likewise, the longitudinal study conducted by researchers Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) arrived at a similar conclusion that "leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning" (p. 3). Through long-term continuous examination stretching almost six years, they also found no "single case of school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership"

(Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010, p. 9). Leaders have the potential to unleash the dormant capacities that exist inside individuals within organizations.

While agreeing on the outcomes of effective leadership, views are divided among researchers regarding how the principal influences student outcomes. Similarly, in examining volumes of empirical studies, Fuller et al. (2015) recently suggested that such influence can be infused via six different interrelated actions: instructional leadership, shared leadership, school climate, organizational structure and forged relationships with stakeholders, teacher learning and teaching quality, and community support and family engagement. Because schools function in a dramatically changing world, these roles are likely to change as principals work to keep pace with their demanding requirements (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

The global economy, 21st century workplace, and technology industries are major factors impacting delivery in the preparation of students (NPBEA, 2015). For these reasons, the new 2015 National Standards for Educational Leaders (NSEL) was released (formerly known as ISLLC Standards) (NPBEA, 2015). The NSEL is the product of an extensive process that encompassed a comprehensive review of empirical research deeply focused on the school leadership landscape.

Through this concerted work, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) were actively involved in recasting the old standards to generate the 2015 standards with a stronger base and clearer emphasis on student learning. This, in turn, defined the foundational principles of leadership to fulfill the ultimate goal that each individual student becomes well educated

and prepared for the 21st-century (NPBEA, 2015). The following 10 national standards

constitute the thematic roles and responsibilities of school leaders:

- Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values;

- Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms;

- Standard 3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness;

- Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment;

- Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students;

- Standard 6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel;

- Standard 7: Professional Community for Teachers and Staff;

- Standard 8: Meaningful Engagement of Families and Communities;

- Standard 9: Operations and Management; and

- Standard 10: School Improvement. (NPBEA, 2015, pp. 9-17)

With the national standards publicly available, it is important to (1) ask whether current

principal supervision and evaluation can keep up with the expectations of such standards

and (2) can leader supervisors address the areas of concern and existing performance

gaps.

As Evan and Mohr (1999) highlighted, throwing principals into schools with

predigested training sessions is not enough to bolster the new thinking of authentic

leadership that promotes effective teaching and learning. While rapidly growing research

has focused on developing the activities and structure of supervision and evaluation in

refining the art of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Iwanicki, 2001), principals seem to

be left to fend for themselves. Alvarado (2001) echoed the following statement: "The

preparation of supervisors makes the preparation of teachers look outstanding. Principals,

vice-principals and superintendents rarely have good places to learn (as cited in National

Staff Development Council, 2000, p. 5).

Principal Supervision and Evaluation

Principals are now in critical positions to lead, influence, and create positive

change for school success, and thus, deserve high-intensity supervision embedded within

a well-established evaluation system that not only satiates the demands of accountability

but also bolsters their performance toward excellence (Lashway, 1998). Stufflebeam and

Nevo (1993) concluded that the overarching purpose of principal evaluation is to

determine if principals have met a predetermined set of goals and expectations, to

improve throughout the school academic year, and ultimately show professional learning

growth. Weiss (1989) emphasized that an evaluation process must clearly communicate

the priority agenda and the overall goals of school districts, therefore yielding benefits

that include encouraging communication within organizations, facilitating reciprocated

goal setting by principal and superintendents, sensitizing evaluators to principals' needs,

and motivating principals to flourish.

Zepeda et al. (2016) illuminated that principals cannot substantially improve or

grow without a supportive structure that encompasses formative, ongoing,

developmental, and differentiated approaches that lead to a summative evaluation from

which new professional goals are established and targeted. This assertion concludes that

supervision and evaluation are interrelated in a cyclical system whereby formative

assessments pave the way and inform the summative assessment in prescribing the most-

needed goals for development and principal growth (Parylo et al., 2012). Furthermore,

according to McGreal (1983), the final destination of all supervisory practices points toward the evaluation.

Many scholars pointed out that the intents of supervision and evaluation for teachers bear many similarities and common grounds with what occurs in the professional context between superintendents (principal supervisor) and principals. This is evidenced in the way that superintendents are tasked with supervising and evaluating principals for their performance (Mattingly, 2003; Zepeda et al., 2016). The intents of effective principal evaluations and supervision are to improve the following practices and activities:

- Face-to-face interaction and relationships building;
- Ongoing instruction for principals focused on creating a learning-conducive environment for teachers and students;
- The improvement of student learning gains as measured by multiple data sources that make sense within the school system;
- Data-based decision-making corroborated with a variety of sources to measure the growth, development, and gaps of principal performance;
- Mutual support for individuals in a manner that each learns from one another;
- Trust-fueled relationships and processes;
- Better developmental learning for principals, teachers, and students—both individually and collectively;
- Meaningful conversations that revolve around teaching, learning, and fostering sufficient conditions that elevate student learning;

- Shared feedback, experiences, and reflections with other school leaders to promote learning; and

- Clear expectations for principal performance that align with the visibility of improvement needs. (Zepeda et al., 2016, p. 68)

Drawing on these intents, scrupulous execution of supervision requires close collaboration between the evaluators and principals and ends with a summative evaluation trail (Reeves, 2013). This trail is foreseeable, yet unavoidable. According to Condon and Clifford (2012), it informs decision-making about the competency of personnel. In addition, principals, in summative evaluations, are held accountable for effectively operating and elevating their school performance. In some cases, it is linked to high-stakes decisions such as incentive paying, continued employment, or even termination (Fuller et al., 2015).

A change in roles and responsibilities of superintendents toward principal supervision and evaluation is now apparent (Zepeda et al., 2016). In the past, supervisors seldom visited schools to directly work with school principals—only once every few months. However, supervision could not surpass a compliance checklist (Gill, 2013). With increased accountability, the work of the supervisors has tremendously changed to meet the demands positioned on school systems.

A major changing role of supervisors is to provide supervision and evaluation that mirrors the work of principals, helping them better lead their schools (Corcoran et al., 2013). In an effort to trace shifts in the work of superintendents, Zepeda et al. (2016) listed the old and new beliefs related to the work of superintendents in leading school systems (p. 66).

Table 2.1

Old and New Beliefs Related to the Work of Superintendents

Old belief—limited accountability placed on school district performance	New belief—full accountability placed on school district performance
• I develop polices to safeguard the system	• I develop polices to innovate the system
• I inform leaders and hold them accountable	• I inspire leaders and hold our team, including myself, accountable
• I set the agenda for board meetings	• I set the agenda for leader and teacher professional learning
• I monitor finance and operations	• I monitor the strategic plan related to school performance
• I allocate human resources	• I advocate for human resources
• I maintain and lead the current system	• I create and lead new systems
• I believe all students can learn	• I believe all student must learn
• I believe decision making is vertical	• I believe decision making is horizontal
• I believe conversations identify problems	• I believe conversations solve problems
• I believe the superintendent and the board are the center of the system	• I believe the vision, mission, and beliefs are the center of the system

(Zepeda et al., 2016, p. 66)

Examining the paradigm shifts identified in Table 2.1, it is apparent that the old

beliefs are comparatively hierarchal and operational in functioning. At the same time, the

new beliefs are more horizontal and instructional in function, situating the superintendent

as a co-learner centered in leading and learning on behalf of stakeholders (students,

teachers, administrators, etc.) to ensure all people within the system improve and grow in

the same direction (Saltzman, 2016; Zepeda at al., 2016). It is a foregone conclusion that

the accountability movement has paved the path for such transformations in the work and

beliefs needed to formulate an agenda that supports principals in better facing daily

school challenges and improving their leadership capacity at the site level (Corcoran et

al., 2013; Zepeda et al., 2016). However, this kind of support is translated and applied differently in schools from one district to another.

Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) addressed three widespread ineffective approaches, which supervisors are hardwired to uphold as they supervise principals: (1) the "point and shoot method," where contact with the principal consists of cameo site appearances; (2) the "macro-lens method," in which the core focus is reviewing documentation; and (3) the "wide zoom method," where little or no visits are made and the evaluation of principals is generated based on reports (p. 70).

Under the best of circumstances, principal supervisors should allocate adequate time (about 50% of their time) to "shoulder to shoulder" conversations with their instructional leaders (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012, p. 71). In addition, as frequently reverberated by Zepeda et al. (2016), to emphasize the "shoulder to shoulder" mechanism, the new work of principal supervisors is grounded in multiple joint conversations that enable the principals to reflect and to self-evaluate issues and growth areas.

From these ongoing professional, yet candid conversations, leadership development of principles can be achieved and disseminated across the system— especially when principal supervisors ask the right questions, when they advocate and make student learning the center of everything, when they forge a trusting relationship with principals revolving around partnership, when they make constant visible presence to add value to the instructional life of school, and when they empower principals to make independent decisions (Gill, 2013; Saltzman, 2016; Stringer, 2017; Zepeda et al., 2016).

Overall, researchers cast skepticism on the current state of principal supervision and evaluation (Derrington & Sanders, 2011; Reeves, 2013; Stufflebeam & Nevo, 1993), and the majority agreed that the current principal evaluation provides little guidance and is performed in a perfunctory manner in many states and school districts (Clayton-Jones et al., 1991; Murphy, Hallinger, & Peterson, 1986). Before examining empirical studies around principal supervision and evaluation nationally and internationally, it is prudent to first understand the theories that boost the effectiveness of principal supervision and evaluation, and then the backgrounds and information regarding the context in which this study was conducted.

Theories Underpinning Principal Supervision and Evaluation Practices

The discussion on theories underpinning principal supervision and evaluation begins with an exploration of developmental and differentiated supervision. Next, an examination of various adult learning theories that are deemed learning-productive are discussed, followed by empirical studies that incorporate such theories.

Developmental Supervision

As widely accepted in the fields of education and supervision, developmental supervision has been largely researched and practiced with teachers. It is a supervisory model that is applicable in the educational setting where supervisors have a tendency to improve and assist supervisees—as is the case with principals and teachers (Zepeda, 2017). By definition, developmental supervision is an evaluative practice that is focused on changing individual behaviors by prompting reflection and critical inquiry (Glickman et al., 2017; Siens & Ebmeier, 1996).

The ability to blend the practices of evaluation with professional development by focusing on improvement and growth through the evaluative relationship is unique to developmental supervision (Glickman et al., 2017; McGill, 1991). This practice has many proponents because of its substantial contribution to supervisee effectiveness. Its aim is to aid professional growth in a more formative way than the traditional summative evaluation (McGill, 1991).

The fundamental premise of developmental supervision is the notion that individuals continuously grow, and that by aligning their experiences with the best-fit approach of developmental supervision, they grow and gain additional strength. From this perspective, the objective of supervision is to diagnose the level at which supervisees function, match the appropriate supervisory style to their level, assist them in considering their current methods, expand their repertoire of practices, and make intelligent instructional decisions accordingly (Glickman & Gordon, 1987). The four approaches associated with developmental supervision are (1) the directive control approach, (2) the directive informational approach, (3) the collaborative approach, and (4) the non-directive approach (Glickman et al., 2017).

The assumption that because supervisees operate at different levels in the continuum of cognitive functions, they require an appropriate supervisory approach aligned with their needs is essential for successful developmental supervision. In addition, as supervisees become self-regulated and self-directed learners, their assigned supervisors' role shifts from being an expert to a facilitator. This causes the supervisory relationship to become more collegial, cooperative, and non-directive (Glickman et al.,

2017). Table 2.2 outlines the four supervisory approaches with their roles and conditions under which supervisors might apply each to provide effective supervision.

Table. 2.2

Characteristics of Supervisory Styles

Supervisory Styles	Supervisee Characteristics	Supervisory Behaviors
Directive control approach: supervisors lead and direct all aspects of the supervision process.	Novice, little expertise, struggling with learning to implement instructional strategies	High supervisory responsibility; very little initiative from supervisees
Directive informational approach: supervisors share information with emphasis on available actions.	Novice, little expertise, struggling with learning to implement instructional strategies	The supervisor is still the primary source of information and practice. Nevertheless, the supervisor cues and stimulates supervisee's input to make final decisions.
Collaborative approach: two-way problem solving––an equal footing stage where supervisors share a supervisee situation and target problems, find alternatives to solve the problem, and mutually propose a designed plan of action.	Experienced with refined skills	Favorable when supervisees exhibit moderate abstraction to accomplish the objectives.
Nondirective approach: supervisors let supervisees operate by themselves in defining problems, generating actions, thinking through consequences, and eventually creating their own action plans.	Master	Low supervisory responsibility over supervisee and final decisions; supervisors act as facilitators involved in helping supervisees define and clarify their perceptions and plans.

(Source: Glickman, 1981)

Before matching supervisees to one of these approaches, supervisors should diagnose them through conversations with supervisees and by asking critical questions. Such diagnosis involves conducting observations of supervisee behaviors, especially in cases where issues are problematic and beyond the capability of the supervisee. During observations, supervisors analyze and evaluate levels of flexibility and adaptability that supervisees exhibit while handling problems (Glickman & Gordon, 1987). Overall, the goal of supervision should be to augment every individual's ability to improve and grow into higher stages of thought (Glickman & Gordon, 1987; Glickman et al., 2017; Murphy & Brown, 1970).

Differentiated Supervision

In contrast with the idea of organizing supervisees into specific categories and responding accordingly, Glatthorn (1990) developed a different supervisory construct called differentiated supervision. Differentiated supervision was first used in an administrator-teacher supervisory setting. Glatthorn developed the differentiated supervisory approach on weaknesses he found in traditional supervisory approaches. First, "not enough is known about adult growth to warrant attaching labels to complex individuals." Second, it is impractical to hope "busy supervisors can find the time and marshal the energy to make individual assessment and respond uniquely to teachers" (Glatthorn, 1984, p. 4).

Stated differently, the rationale behind differentiated supervision is that one sole approach is neither feasible nor necessarily applicable to all personnel because every individual has different growth needs and unique learning styles. Moreover, various factors—such as the kind of supervisory relationship, the environment in which

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individuals work and interact, the present stimulus to learn in that environment, and the availability of resources—determine how to set the most individualized supervisory approaches (Glatthorn, 1984).

Another important aspect of differentiated supervision system is the indispensable involvement of supervisees in three related processes to ensure the development of their instructional performance, namely the supervisee evaluation, professional development, and informal observations (Glatthorn, 1990). Supervisees must be involved in at least two or more of the following supervisory approaches:

1. Intensive development through the use of the clinical supervisory cycle;

2. Cooperative development whereby supervisees engage in different activities, such as peer coaching or action research; or/and

3. Self-directed activates in which supervisees take ownership and work independently on professional growth. (Glatthorn, 1990, p. 179)

Administrative monitoring is necessary throughout the supervisory process to ensure staff perform their work and responsibilities in a professional manner.

Every individual can benefit from continual monitoring performed by respected, knowledgeable, and trusted supervisors. Although developmental and differentiated supervision were first meant for the relationship between teachers and school administrators, it is important to underscore their compatibility with central office supervisors and principals due to the similar working conditions and commonalities shared with principals and teachers (Zepeda et al., 2016).

Only one multi-purpose study adopted developmental supervision as a theoretical foundation to primarily examine the lived experience of principals being evaluated in the

evaluation process (Parylo et al., 2012). The phenomenology was anchored as a base methodology guiding the study. The researchers interviewed 16 participants (8 male and 8 female principals) from 4 school systems in Georgia. In their examination of the phenomenological findings tied to developmental supervision, Parylo et al. (2012) found no sign of a directive control approach in the evaluation process. In contrast, the directive informational approach was partially evident in the feedback and trust/respect themes. Clearly, the nondirective approach manifested itself in the principals guiding themselves through the evaluation process and reflecting on their practices.

The dominant approach embedded in the evaluation process was the collaborative approach as the open dialogue allowed for evaluators and principals to have two-way communication. This approach promoted a mutually developed evaluation process. Parylo et al. (2012) concluded that individuals can develop properly when evaluation is configured to be formative, collaborative, dialogic, and engaging in reflective practices throughout the process. In the end, the findings of the study might not be generalizable but are transferrable to other systems holding the same characteristics. Its unique design attests to the suitability and functionality of developmental supervision serving evaluators in supervising and evaluating principals.

Adult Learning Theory

Evaluators engaging principals in developmental supervision, differentiated supervision, or other supervisory practices as part of professional development within a curriculum-wisdom paradigm should comprehend the theories of adult learning (Conlan, Grabowski, & Smith, 2003; Knowles, 1984; Langer & Applebee, 1986) because the

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objectives of supervision and evaluation are to improve the capacity of adult learning, which leads to performance effectiveness (Parylo et al., 2012).

One enduring adult learning theory is andragogy, inextricably associated with Knowles in the field of adult education. Knowles developed andragogy around five assumptions that are fundamental to the characteristics of adult learners, and which are different from assumptions regarding child learners: adult learners (1) have an independent self-concept capable of directing his or her own learning; (2) have an accumulative reservoir of life experience that is rich and receptive to learning; (3) have learning needs relatively associated with the surrounding changing social norms; (4) are problem-centered with impulsive desire for immediate application of knowledge; and (5) are motivated to learn by more internal than external factors (Knowles, 1984).

In similar fashion, Langer and Applebee (1986) proposed five components that are needed for more effective learning and productivity as built into the learning experience. By giving learners an autonomy to direct and guide their learning (ownership), tasks matched to their needs level (appropriateness), natural sequence of activities and clear guidelines (structure), opportunities to work together with their peers (collaboration), and chances to implement what has been learned so that new learning skills becomes part of the learners' own repertories (internalization), learners can possibly push the boundaries of their limits continually further to reach skill mastery (Langer & Applebee, 1986).

Conlan et al. (2003), in focusing on active learning strategies, believed that learning can be amplified drastically through the employment of four-composite approaches (action learning, self-directed learning, experiential learning, and project-

based learning). First, action learning centers on the premise that learning is attained from constant interplay of reflection and action on the task at hand between small support group members.

In contrast, self-directed learning is more similar to informal learning, as when learners take on responsibility for their learning by diagnosing their own learning needs, setting personal and professional goals, searching for proper resources, implementing strategies, and evaluating outcomes (Conlan et al., 2003). However, the experiential learning approach allows learners to generate understanding through "learning by doing" coupled with a "cyclic process involving setting goals, thinking, planning, involving setting goals, thinking, planning, experimenting and making decisions, and finally action, followed by observing, reflecting, and reviewing" (Conlan et al., 2003, p. 119). Lastly, project-based learning occurs as adults effectively participate in authentic cooperative learning activities aimed at building teamwork and collaboration skills.

Remarkably, the theories related to adult learning seem to intersect, to some degree, in their components. For example, self-directed learning overlaps across all theories, followed by the collaboration component. Furthermore, for learners to benefit from their workshop, program, or any evaluation system, the designer should incorporate such principles to be deep-rooted and with full exposure so that adult learners can significantly benefit from the learning experience (Knowles, 1984; Merriam, 2001; Parylo et al., 2012; Zepeda et al., 2014). Unfortunately, limited research studies focused on analyzing supervision and evaluation for principals from the lenses of adult learning theories exist in current literature.

Zepeda et al. (2014) analyzed the principal professional development programs of four school districts in Georgia through the lens of adult learning theory. In doing so, Zepeda et al. (2014) interviewed 18 participants representing principals and central office leaders believed to provide rich data and relevant documents collected for triangulation purposes. Zepeda et al. (2014) employed three qualitative analytic processes that started with furnishing the results of each single case, followed by a cross-case analysis, and then examining the same by applying the characteristics of adult learning theory. The results of Zepeda et al.'s (2014) study showed that adult learning principles manifested themselves in professional development practices at different levels.

The characteristics that most frequently manifested were relevancy-oriented and problem-centered principles, which indicated that participants valued professional learning reflecting the realities of their school work and adversity of their encounters in school. In addition, the almost-nonexistent principle within the systems was self-direction. Participants had limited choice regarding the types of professional development available.

Zepeda et al. (2014) concluded that despite the inclusion of most principles of adult learning theory, there was no evidence whether such inclusion was intentional by the designer. In such cases, Zepeda et al. (2014) strongly urged school districts to actively and consciously consider the incorporation of adult learning principles as the foundation when designing professional development opportunities for principals. The involvement of principals in mapping their leadership development and personal professional development is a way to engage them in their personal performance-evaluative process

because professional development and learning are essential parts of their cycle assessment and evaluation.

The Principal Supervision and Evaluation in the United Arab Emirates

This section discusses the context of the study, highlighting critical events and milestones that led to the creation of principal supervision and evaluation in the UAE. It starts with a brief background on the evolution of education in the country, followed by the establishment of Abu Dhabi Education Council, and the implementation of the New School Model (NSM). Then, the focus of the discussion turns to deal with the creation of professional standards and principal supervision and evaluation in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

The Evolution of Education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The UAE is a country of federation that initially started with the alliance of six emirates, united on December 2, 1971. These emirates included Abu Dhabi (the capital emirate), Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Quwain. The seventh Emirate, Ras al-Khaimah, officially decided to amalgamate with the other emirates of the alliance in 1972 (Taryam, 1987). Each Emirate is ruled by a monarch, known as a Sheikh; and together, they form the Federal Supreme Council (Mustafa, 2010). Similarly, through a consensus agreement of all Sheikhs, the president of the UAE is elected (Mustafa, 2010).

Currently, the UAE focuses most of its efforts on revamping and preparing the country for the future in a variety of aspects. Chiefly among these aspects, considerable emphasis is placed on education. As the former president and founder of the UAE Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan illuminated, "The greatest use that can be made of wealth is to invest it in creating generations of educated and trained people" (Alabed, Vine, &

Hellyer, 2005, p. 4). Discovery of oil reserves in the UAE and resulting oil industry made it easier to afford various advancements in the country's infrastructure. It afforded His Highness, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan the power to make education a priority for the growing population. Sheikh Zayed wanted to use the revenue collected from the oil to develop technically and academically qualified citizens (Ridge, 2014).

In addition, during the establishment of the UAE in 1971, the founders realized that education was a crucial part of making a healthy society; and thus, the Ministry of Education was built, a milestone where the ongoing improvement of education gained further momentum. After this event, zones—or districts, as known in western education systems—were scattered per emirate, supervising and guiding the schools.

The two main branches of the Ministry of Education were based in the emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai (Noir, 1996). On this basis, the Ministry of Education has been committed to improving lifelong education and incorporating the following types of education to accommodate all individuals within the fabric of UAE society: public education; private education; and special education, literacy and adult education (Alkhalid & Alsuwaidi, 1993; Kamal, Saad, Zaal, & Sameh, 1993). However, despite gains in education accessibility, the system does not excel and compete with international standards because of its complete reliance on memorization and rote learning.

The educational system placed significant value on the teacher as the main vessel of knowledge and information to students (Godwin, 2006). Equally important, the curricula remained teacher-centered because the learning process relied heavily on the ability of the teacher to deliver information in class. Under the old curriculum, students' job involved memorizing facts and repeating them on exams to get the best marks (Gaad,

Arif, & Scott, 2006). During that time, the teacher had very little latitude when it came to influencing student outcomes because his or her job entailed communicating knowledge from textbooks to the students. This method progressed in the country until the establishment of the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), which accelerated the growth of education—particularly in the Abu Dhabi Emirate (ADEC, n.d.-d).

The Establishment of the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC)

The Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) was established and formed immediately after law No. 24 of 2005 was passed. This law was issued by UAE President Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan to ensure the full authority of education (i.e., ADEC) over the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. ADEC has full educational authority over the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, which includes the city of Al-Ain and the western region known as Al-Gharbia (Pierson, 2011). With the adoption of ADEC, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi separated from the Ministry of Education, leaving the other six emirates (Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras Al-Khaimah, Umm Al-Quwain, and Fujairah) under its jurisdiction.

While the Ministry of Education formulates and codifies its federal policy of education, ADEC remains responsible for the future planning and advancement of education in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2011). With the ambitious goal of developing education and educational institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, ADEC has implemented a series of innovative educational policies, strategic plans, and programs designed to improve education and personnel therein to fulfill the national development objectives that meet the highest international standards (ADEC, n.d.-a).

As a starting point, ADEC has created and issued a strategic plan for grades P-12 in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, which will be carefully implemented in the next ten years. The plan's pillars are six-fold: transcending the quality of education to meet international standards; improving access to P-12 education; providing parents with alternative affordable options of high-quality private education for their children; maintaining the cultural heritage of the UAE embedded in the curricula; building on ADEC capabilities; and actively engaging stakeholders in the learning process (ADEC, 2012). The six pillars were created to address overall challenges in a way that allowed the organization to channel its focus into elevating current education for children and young adults within the P-12 system (Pierson, 2011).

The New School Model (NSM)

The key of success to achieving these six pillars and backbone of the current Emirate-wide education system is the implementation of The New School Model (NSM) reform commenced by ADEC in 2009. ADEC believes that the NSM model will make substantial changes in teaching and learning in all schools when fully implemented and embraced by stakeholders, resulting in vastly improved student achievement (Pierson, 2011). It was also developed by ADEC to focus on specific points identified by the UAE government as vital to school improvement. The ideals of applying a new approach to teaching and learning to amplify student learning experiences, and boosting the academic achievement of Abu Dhabi students to be internationally competitive were identified as imperative to effectively respond to the existing challenges facing the school system (Pierson, 2011).

The underlying message of NSM is that students are the main communicators and critical thinkers, and are expected to be able to solve problems using creative thinking, as well as to fluently master both the English and Arabic languages (Pierson, 2011). The NSM will also help better prepare students for federal universities in the future and shorten the years until graduation since the foundation year therein will be removed (Pennington, 2015). All schools administered by the ADEC are required to use the NSM at each level of learning. The model was launched for kindergarten to third grade in September 2010, and extended to implementation in grade four in 2011, and grade five in 2012. The full implementation is still taking place and expected to be fully operative up to grade 12 by 2018 (Pierson, 2011).

At its onset, ADEC hired thousands of English medium teachers from different countries around the globe, such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand to take over the teaching of English medium subjects such as Science, Math, and English in Cycle 1 (grades 1 to 5), and English in Cycle III (grades 10-12) (Dickson & Kadbey, 2014). The intention is that eventually all old and less effective aspects of learning will be phased out.

According to the results of international tests after three years of implementing NSM in Cycle I, the performance of Emirate students was the best of all Arab countries that took part in the TIMSS, PIRLS, and PISA in 2011. However, when compared globally, the country ranked lower than average—in 40th place out of 60 countries assessed (Lawrence, 2013). These scores proclaimed that the educational system required a collective effort from all stakeholders to effectively operate the NSM, especially those

in leadership positions. School leaders must set direction for school-wide vision and ensure the full elements and principles of NMS are in place.

As a result, professional standards and an evaluation system with close supervision embedded were devised to hold school principals accountable and responsible for providing effective leadership practices and management, and ensure high standard achievements in all areas of school work (ADEC, n.d.-b). Additional innovative reforms and programs were initiated to cultivate and enhance the work of principals, such as Irtiqa'a (school inspection) (ADEC, n.d.-d), Qiydaya (professional development) for school leaders (ADEC, n.d.-e), Tamkeen (Empowerment) (ADEC, n.d.-f), and licensure (Pennington, 2017).

Professional Standards for Principals

Professional standards for principals were created, revised, and passed on within school districts. ADEC emphatically highlighted these professional standards as the backbone of the process, which laid out what the school principals were expected to do, understand, and perform to achieve their works. In practice, the standards reflected the quality and values of the leadership responsibilities that research and practice suggest are vital to student success.

As the principals act on these standards, they are expected to (1) lead schools strategically with an expressive vision, goals, and mission; (2) ensure that students receive effective teaching and learning by providing continuous learning to all adults; (3) make informed decisions for the betterment of the organization; (4) lead school personnel with professional development; (5) and lead the community by forging strong relationships with stakeholders, without whom the desired results cannot be achieved

(ADEC, n.d.-b). Each one of these standards prescribes more in-depth directions for practice, knowledge, indicators, and examples defined in the principal handbook.

Principal Supervision and Evaluation

Linking professional standards to principal evaluation is vital in guiding professional development and ensuring principals are committed to achieving high standards in all areas. Figure 2.1 presents the model of Abu Dhabi Vision 2030 illustrating the cycle of teaching and learning. Borrowed from the *Professional Standards for Principals* (p. 25), by the Abu Dhabi Education Council (n.d.-c). For ADEC, the most critical indicator among these standards is the capability of principals to lead and improve teaching and learning, thus improve student achievement (ADEC, n.d.-b). This step requires experts armed with knowledge and experience to shadow principals in their day-to-day practice and provide guidance and support. Therefore, a new evaluative position was created—that is, cluster managers were hired to monitor, supervise, and evaluate school principals and administrators on these professional standards.
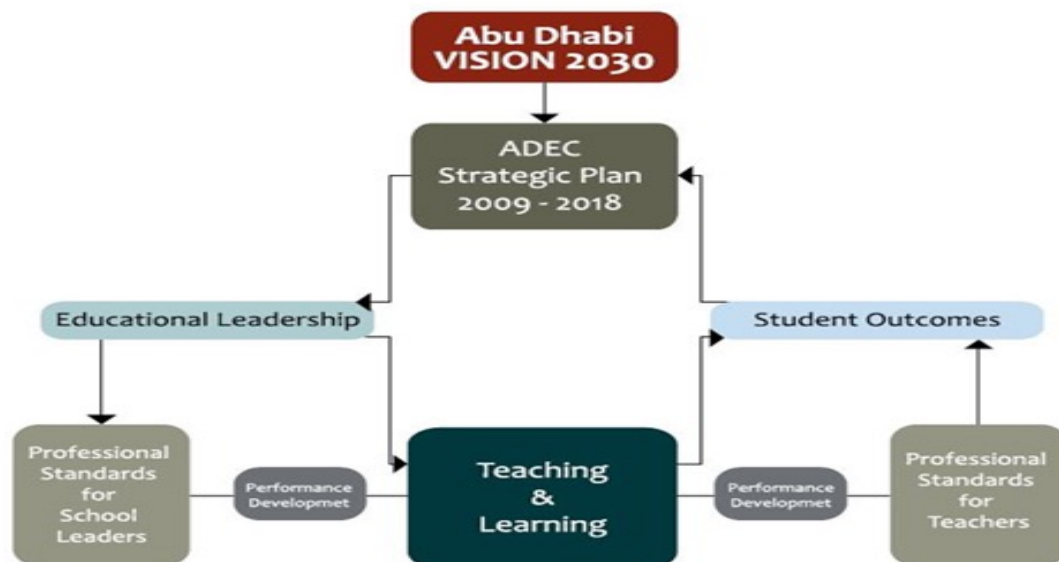
Figure 2.1. Model of Abu Dhabi 2030 Vision

With the evaluation system in place, ADEC aspires to improve leadership skills, teaching, and the learning quality of schools so that students would have a greater chance of future success (ADEC, n.d.-c). Clearly, principal evaluation can serve as a tool for attestation by providing ADEC and principals with critical information on professional growth and area of concerns. Data gathered from the onset to the end is vital to outlining a professional and school development plan. For example, the Principal Performance Evaluation's instrument is evidenced-based against the internationally established Professional Standards for Principals (ADEC, n.d.-b).

The instrument consists of 18 elements that fall under all 5 standards (Table 2.3), forming a guide for principals to gauge their actual performance. To illustrate, the elements are delineated into categories defining varying levels of expertise and progression, starting from pre-foundation to foundation, emerging, established, accomplished, and exemplary (ADEC, 2011). Even more critically, the principal is responsible for amassing evidence of performance through a portfolio to defend against these defensible elements and facilitate dialogue during the evaluation process.

Table 2.3

Principal Performance Evaluation and Professional Standards

Standard one: Leading Strategically: Principals are visionary leaders of the school			
Leading strategically	Element 1: Vision and Strategic goal	Element 2: Leading change	Element 3: school planning
Standard two: Leading Teaching and Learning: Principals are the educational and instructional leaders of schools			
Leading teaching and learning	Element 4: Curriculum Element 7: Learning environment	Element 5: Teaching effectiveness	Element 6: Student achievement

Table 2.3 (Continued)

Principal Performance Evaluation and Professional Standards

Standard three: Leading People: Principals are the apex of the school leadership team			
Leading people	Element 8: Continuous learning Element 11: conflict management	Element 9: professional development Element 12: Distributed leadership	Element 10: principal as leader
Standard four: Leading the organization: Principals are the organizational leaders of schools			
Leading organization	Element 13: Policies and procedures	Element 14: Finance	Element 15: Resources and facilitates
Standard five: Leading the community: Principals are the leaders of school community			
Leading the community	Element 16: Parent involvement	Element 17: Collaborating with community stakeholders	Element 18: Sharing learning

(Source: ADEC, n.d.-c)

ADEC began evaluating principals against their professional standards in 2010-2011 (ADEC, 2011). However, because of the recent establishment of the whole education system in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, and particularly in Al-Ain, there is no single study or data that illuminates the evaluative and supervisory practices. In this case, the aim of this present study was to holistically explore the practices of principal evaluation, analyze the supervisory approaches selected to support current principals, and to examine the degree to which the evaluation process and supervision promote adult learning in Al-Ain school district.

For these reasons, and to enrich the literature on the topic of principal supervision and evaluation, a close examination of empirical studies in the United States and other countries are discussed in the following section.

Examination of Empirical Studies

A substantial number of recent studies reviewed in this section provided significant evidence about the evolution of principal evaluation systems in terms of planning, focus, and implementation in the United States and other parts of the world. Some of these studies include those of Aldaoud (2008), Catano and Stronge (2007), Davis et al. (2011), Goldring et al. (2009), Kimball et al. (2009), Liu, Xu, Grant, Strong, and Fang (2017), Muenich (2014), Sun, Youngs, Yang, Chu and Zhao (2012), Thomas et al. (2000), and Zepeda et al. (2014).

Other studies followed the implementation of supervisory practices within the evaluation process to help school leaders improve their leadership skills. They include those of Abu Risq (2012), Casserly et al. (2013), Corcoran et al. (2013), Fathi (1995), Goldring et al. (2018), Honig (2012), Hvidston et al. (2016), and Yavuz (2010). The selected studies varied in data and methodology.

Principal Evaluation: Planning, Purposes, Component, and Implementation

In an attempt to examine the suitability of the adopted principal evaluation plans across the United States, Fuller et al. (2015) conducted a survey supported by a document analysis to include 50 states and the District of Columbia. The survey originally included 35 states in 2011, then five additional states in 2012. Data on the remaining 11 states were obtained using search websites for principal evaluations located in the State Education Agency's (SEA) database. In addition, Fuller et al. (2015) used coding techniques to analyze and assemble findings.

In reviewing the data, six identified purposes emerged regarding the evaluation systems—and some states had multiple purposes. They ranged from honing instructional

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leadership skills (40 states), to improving student achievement (27 states), providing feedback to principals (16 states), improving teaching and learning quality (15 states), ensuring effective school leaders (21 states), and using the results to make personnel decisions (12 states).

States using the evaluation results to inform high-stakes decisions were more likely to employ either the Value-Added Measure approach (VAM) or Student Growth Percentile (SGP). Fuller et al. (2015) refuted the assumption that the total measures of school and student achievement accurately capture the effectiveness of principals by using measure approaches proved ineffective and not capable of isolating such effects. In this case, there are no current statistical measures that can accurately determine the actual impact and effectiveness of principals. Moreover, Fuller et al. (2015) recommended using results to make high-stakes decisions for principals, especially for termination, is unwarranted and unethical because it places states in a fragile position when lawsuits are filed.

In another study targeting the current practices of principal evaluation, Catano and Stronge (2007) explained their purpose was to explore the degree of emphasis on instructional leadership and management in the principal evaluation process. A total sample of 100 evaluation instruments were used and received from 97 school districts in the state of Virginia. Catano and Stronge's (2007) study used content analysis as the primary method, simply by determining categories, test coding, and calculating frequencies to analyze and then determine areas of emphasis as expressed in the evaluation instruments.

Research showed 91% of the evaluation instruments used the language of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards in addressing their leadership roles and management-related responsibilities. Most of the instruments, 70%, reflected the involvement of data analysis in supporting student achievement. Emphasis on training and professional development for teachers, reflected by 15% in the evaluation instruments, was at the bottom of the list.

Following the findings, Catano and Stronge (2007) concluded with a recommendation that districts revise evaluation instruments in a manner that matches state and professional standards to avoid conflicts and deliver clear communication to principals concerning their expectations and job performance. Overall, this study is limited in the way it captures the aspects of principal evaluation of only one state.

Having the same research purpose, Goldring et al. (2009) conducted an extensive review study by examining principal evaluation documents implemented by urban school districts associated with reform initiatives sponsored and commissioned by the Wallace Foundation. Initially concerned with how urban school districts constructed and implemented principal evaluation, Goldring et al. (2009) critically analyzed the content of 68 evaluation instruments (56 at the district level and 9 at the state level). The learning-centered leadership model served as the theoretical framework. The study revealed that half of the districts' evaluation protocols (50%) did not match with the professional standards of principals.

Goldring et al.'s (2009) concern was finding that factors related to the roles of principals in endorsing a rigorous curriculum with high-quality instruction received far less attention in the evaluation documents. Notwithstanding, rather than relying on

rubric-based assessments or portfolio documentation, too often the vast majority of evaluation instruments reviewed heavily used rating scales. Furthermore, of the 68 school districts, only 2 used meticulous measures to ensure the validity and reliability of their evaluations. In addition, none of the evaluation documents stated the specific skills or roles that principal supervisors needed in the process to support their principals. Goldring et al. (2009) concluded that the significant variability in how principal performance is evaluated requires instrumentation to be both valid and reliable.

The extensive review conducted by Davis et al. (2011) show similar findings to those of Fuller et al. (2015) and Goldrin et al. (2009). With the purpose of examining the relevant and accessible research studies (28 primary sources and 40 secondary sources) on the topic of principal evaluation, Davis et al. (2011) found that most of states' and districts' evaluation systems lacked validity and reliability. Additionally, there were fundamental misunderstandings between evaluators and principals regarding the processes, expectations, and outcomes of the evaluation—which, consequently, may impede the increase in capacity in teaching and learning and the ability to achieve organizational outcomes.

A growing number of school districts began emphasizing the instructional leadership roles of principals. However, the evaluation systems still languished in misalignment with incorporating such roles and standards. Although this study has discussed unearthing critical discovery in the realm of principal evaluation, the findings pertain more to how certain states and districts plan to assess their principals, rather than how they actually assess them. Davis et al. (2011) called for future research to be centered around the impact of evaluation on principal performance.

Through an investigation of the perceptions of Minnesota principals about their principal evaluation process, Muenich (2014) conducted a primary quantitative study in design, using a survey to gain positive and negative views about previous experiences of the principals' evaluation. To strengthen the internal validity and refine the survey, two pilot studies were conducted; the first version was given to Doctoral students at St. Cloud State University, the second to 13 school administrators in the Northeast Division of Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals. Muenich (2014) again revised and administered the survey to 582 secondary school principals, of whom only 124 responded.

Muenich (2014) found that the majority of principals (90%) agreed that their previous evaluation was consistent and fair. Principals indicated they preferred that student achievement comprise 10 - 25% of their evaluation. Most of the respondents rated instructional leadership as the most important duty for their performance, while acting with integrity and ethics ranked second, and the lowest ratings were managerial duties, community communications, and understanding legal and political aspects.

Paradoxically, while principals rated instructional leadership practices as their most important duty, they emphasized time devoted to managing daily operations. Muenich (2014) concluded that principals cannot develop their instructional practices without ongoing professional development opportunities and that policy-makers should be careful when using student-achievement data in the evaluation process—at least until further supported by research.

Building an evaluation framework appropriate for school principals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Aldaoud (2008) examined the perceptions of educators

regarding the current evaluative practices implemented therein. Aldaoud (2008) used a

mixed method approach: interviews to answer the primary question "what are the current

practices of evaluation system in the kingdom?" and a survey used to answer the

secondary questions derived from the primary one. The study comprised 64 participants,

including school principals, University Faculty, and school officials working in the

ministry of education. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistical techniques,

limited to frequencies and percentages. Interview data analysis techniques were not

identified in the study.

Aldaoud (2008) found that wide condemnation among the respondents regarding

the current evaluation system, and its rusty traditional evaluation process that neither fits

the accountability and measures, nor improve leaders. The participants indicated the

complete absence of supervision embedded within to improve leaders in the process. The

evaluation was ultimately focused on managerial duties. Therefore, Aldaoud (2008)

called school districts and authorities to consider the new proposed evaluation framework

inspired by sound evaluation systems of other countries capable of dealing with new

demands and accountability, with emphasis on a supervision piece to improve the

capacity of school principals.

Fathi (1995) explored the evaluative and supervisory practices as performed by

school principals and their evaluators in Egypt. The study's aim was to gain

understanding of how school principals were evaluated, challenges throughout the

process, and nature of the relationship expressed in the evaluation process between

principles and supervisors. The researcher used a quantitative method by creating a

survey distributed to a total sample of 45 principals and supervisors to examine their perceptions regarding such. No theoretical framework was located in the study.

In analyzing the data, Fathi (1995) found that the majority of participants questioned the usefulness and fairness of the evaluation while doubting its ability to promote a learning experience. In light of evaluation appropriateness to school levels, the participants stated the principal evaluation placed no emphasis on school site differences (i.e. level, urban, remote, poverty, student population, culture, and/or tradition). Based on these findings, Fathi (1995) singled out the following recommendations for school district officials and policy makers: (1) the need to effectively train principals and supervisors on the principal evaluation process; (2) supervisors should judge principals based on their real performance, not based on seniority; (3) the employment of effective-proven practices in the evaluation process; and (4) careful consideration should be taken in evaluating school principals, in conjunction with school levels, differences, demographics, etc.

Sun et al. (2012) examined the principal evaluation policy and leadership practices in Michigan (the U.S.) and the Beijing metropolitan city (China). Specifically, the intention was to see the differences between two regions in term of leadership practices, the purpose of evaluation along with content, and source of evidence throughout the process. Through a quantitative approach, Sun et al. (2012) administered surveys to a random sample of 138 K-12 public school principals in Michigan State, and to 145 K—12 public school principals in Beijing. The response rates were 88 (63.3%) and 90 (62.1%) respectively. Various statistical tests were used to analyze the data, such

Wilcoxon Rank Sums tests (for rating scale), Cross-tab Chi-square tests (for dichotomous variables), and two sample T-tests.

The findings revealed that the Beijing principals exercised several leadership practices (maintaining high visibility, protecting instructional time, supervising and evaluating instruction) to a significantly greater extent than their Michigan counterparts. Results indicated that both regions used an evaluation system to provide information to improve leadership practices, to create professional development, to hold principals accountable, and to make personnel decisions. There was no significant difference in principals' perception in the content area of principal evaluation.

Finally, Beijing principals perceived the evaluation more likely than their peers to be based on collecting several sources of evidence via observations conducted by supervisors, artifacts and samples of work provided by principals, complaints from parents and teachers, feedback, mentors, student achievement, and school audit. Sun et al. (2012) acknowledged the limitations of the study, particularly the inability to generalize the findings due to small sample size. In addition, no large-scale pilot study was preceded in either the Michigan or Beijing case, causing a possible violation of the internal validity.

In another study that used a randomized trail experiment, Kimball et al. (2009) found that the new standard-based evaluation system outperformed the old evaluation system. The study's main purpose was to determine any differences between both assigned groups regarding the clarity of their districts' expectations, quality of feedback, usefulness, fairness, and overall satisfactions with the evaluation process. Kimball et al. (2009) randomly assigned 76 principals from school districts located in the western states

into 2 groups; the first group participated in a district using traditional evaluation methods, whereas the second group was exposed to a new standards-based approach to evaluation.

In general, principals who participated in the standard-based evaluation viewed their evaluation more favorably than did principals in the traditional evaluation setting. Nevertheless, evaluators' erratic levels of effort and commitment in the evaluation process compromised the benefits presumed. As a result, they were perceived as unhelpful by principals. This study suffers from the sample selection process and low-rate response affecting the statistical power and causal effect. Finally, the quality of implementation was identified as an important key determinant in the triumph of the principal evaluation process—in this study, as well as in other studies reviewed.

Thomas et al. (2000) conducted a mixed method study to investigate how closely practices of principal evaluation aligned with those in the literature of principal evaluation—as enacted in Alberta school districts in Canada. Thomas et al. (2000) study sample was 67 superintendents and 100 principals who took part in a multi-phase study encompassing an analysis of district evaluation documents, a revised questionnaire, and a series of interviews with a subsample of 10 superintendents and 10 principals. Thomas et al. (2000) used frequency analysis, mean, cross-tabulation, p-values, and thematic analysis to examine the data from which four key findings emerged: (1) substantial variations existed among superintendents and principals concerning the purposes and expectations of the principal evaluation process; (2) flexible evaluative practices existed in attending to the individual contextual needs and cultural characteristics of each school; (3) evaluators employed multiple data sources to obtain a more accurate "big picture"

about principal performance; and (4) the superintendent placed a higher value on the evaluation process than did principals. Thomas et al. (2000) recommended that district and school leaders reconcile and unify their purpose and practices for principal evaluation; otherwise, unintended consequences may transpire.

Zepeda et al. (2014) examined the arising conflicts and tensions as one superintendent confronted evaluating school principals in a high-stakes environment that had underwent remarkable transformation. The study's primary question was "how does the superintendent appraise immense amount of data about student achievement, school-improvement progress, and then link such information to the principal evaluation performance?" To answer this question, Zepeda et al. (2014) employed a qualitative study—anchored by the constructivist theoretical framework perspective and conceptualized by a single and intrinsic case study method—to better understand the tensions experienced by a superintendent. The focus of this study was on the solitary superintendent, regardless of other principals involved in 20 cycles of principal evaluation meetings.

Through using shadowing, observation techniques ensued by briefing sessions, Zepeda et al. (2014) identified tensions, which were examined with respect to the superintendent's work and the principal evaluation process: (1) inconsistencies between principal performance when compared to school performance data; (2) indeterminate length of time in principalship to see desired effect; (3) balancing student achievement data and other indicators of principal performance; (4) what types of achievement data to consider more important and when they are available; (5) complaints about structural changes carried out by principals; (6) balancing between the self-rating assessment scores

of principals and the scores given by the evaluator; and (7) how to challenge personal factors when evaluating principles.

Zepeda et al. (2014) concluded the tensions-related principal evaluation largely depends on how much data to consider relevant to principal evaluation when making decisions, and more crucially, the knowledge and capacity the superintendent possesses about each school and even more so about the individual principal. Superintendents must ask well-crafted and differentiated questions to ensure principals not only understand their work, but how to carry it with ownership and quality.

Moreover, superintendents should place high priority on principal evaluations and conduct honest conversation with their principal(s), thereby developing additional capacity for the evaluation system. Finally, if tensions are not put into perspective, they become the main focus, resulting in straying from the primary tasks and purposes of evaluating principals, which are supporting and shaping their leadership capacities.

Supervision Embedded in the Evaluation Process

Yavuz (2010) reported on linking supervision to the evaluation process provided to principals. The study's purpose was to examine the effectiveness of supervision embedded in the evaluation process in Konya (a province in the Turkish Republic). Only 8 randomly chosen school principals volunteered for 90-minute, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. The study was qualitative in design with no use of theoretical framework. In the study findings, participants perceived supervision as more bureaucratic and poorly implemented because the focus of principal supervisors was more on administrative duties than instructional leadership roles. The supervisors' primary agenda when visiting schools was the school's physical conditions and the arrangement of

paperwork and documentation. Also, the conversation between supervisors and principals was one-sided and never went beyond managerial territory.

Yavuz (2010) determined that no benefit is gained from supervision embedded in the evaluation process if the focus of supervisors is revolved around the administrative duties of principals. Research concluded that linking supervision to instructional leadership is highly important and warrants training and professional development programs for principal supervisors to nurture their capacity and quality (Yavuz, 2010).

Abu Risq (2012) conducted a different study with the purpose of identifying the perceptions of school principals regarding the current practices of their supervision and evaluation system in the Middle Eastern region of Gaza, Palestine. Participants included 200 principals (95 male and 105 female) in different school levels. No theoretical framework was identified. Additionally, the study was quantitatively designed in that the participants were surveyed and asked at the end to complete a short two-question, open-ended, about the setbacks of evaluation and ways to revamp the system. Abu Risq's findings indicated the following: the evaluation system did not reflect what principals should perform in actual reality; the evaluation was not fair because it was based on a mere visit by a random principal supervisor from the central office; and the complete absence of principal supervision was present in the process.

Principals felt inferior in the process because the system's rigidity did not allow them to challenge their score. Thus, they regarded the evaluation as an inspection with a checklist rating system. Moreover, no open discussion occurred between the two educators, which was largely dominated by supervisors. Abu Risq (2012) recommended that principal supervisors shift from simply being passive characters in the process to

serving as supportive supervisors and objective evaluators. Abu Risq (2012) also highlighted the value of supervisors in guiding principals through dynamic conversation and discussion to help make evaluations a process where leaders engage in dialogue and reflect on their own practices.

Hvidston et al. (2016) investigated principals' perceptions across two areas first, the components of an ideal evaluation; and second, their current supervisory feedback during their evaluation process. The research team surveyed a population of 255 principals ranging from elementary and middle schools to high schools in the Rocky Mountains. At the end of the survey, two open-ended questions followed. The survey had a low number of respondents (only 88 principals—a 33% response rate). In addition, no theoretical framework, detailed statistical test, or analytical procedure was identified in the study.

The results revealed that principals wished the evaluation included well-identified responsibilities; professional growth that gauges where principals stand and means to improvement; student achievement measures; and an instructional leadership focus. The participants added that for the supervision piece to be successful, it had to foster specific feedback related to instructional practices and a reflective opportunity for school leaders to consider their practices. According to their study findings, Hvidston et al. (2016) concluded that effective principal supervision and evaluation are highly achievable when orchestrated by qualified, competent, and reliable supervisors.

In effort to understand the supervisory practices and challenges, Casserly et al. (2013) explored the roles of principal supervisors in supervising and evaluating school principals. The 135 participants were purposefully selected by superintendents and

volunteered to complete a questionnaire concerning their changing roles and responsibilities in evaluating and supervising principals over two years (2011-2012), their professional development, and their perceived effectiveness of the principal evaluation system. The study was quantitatively oriented and primarily used frequency tables, counts for individuals, and simple statistical calculations, such as mean, median, standard deviation, max, and min. No theoretical framework was mentioned in the study as it relied more on the perceptions of principal supervisors.

The findings generated by the Casserly et al (2013) study reveal that the top five roles in which supervisors indicated they were engaged in the principal evaluation process at the end of 2012 were: (1) visiting schools; (2) meeting with principals to discuss instructional matters; (3) evaluating principals; (4) supervising and coaching principals; and (5) conducting professional development sessions with principals. The respondents indicated that although roles and responsibilities shifted to align with instructional leadership, additional administrative and compliance roles were added, causing tensions and hurdles in performance balancing.

Drawing on the data, Casserly et al. (2013) concluded that the roles of principal supervisors are evolving to emphasize instructional leadership. Even so, districts need to clearly communicate and define operational and instructional activities along with required competencies shouldered on those individuals serving in these positions.

In a deeper and richer study, Goldring et al. (2018) investigated a project commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, referred to as the Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI). It was a longitudinal, four-year, 24-million-dollar attempt at aiding six districts in transforming their principal supervisor positions (Goldring et al., 2018).

However, traditionally, principal supervisors focused on weighty administrative duties, oversights, operations, and compliance with a new endorsement emphasizing the enhancement of principal development and elevation of the core functions of teaching and learning in schools. In their study, Goldring et al.'s (2018) primary objective was to unfold the districts' numerous achievements, address the major challenges encountered with the PSI, and underline the key takeaways from which other states and districts could benefit.

The data collection methods derived from the study were primarily based on 219 semi-structed interviews with central office staff, principal supervisors, and school principals; two rounds of surveys administrated for each PSI district between 2015 and 2017; and an analysis of documents and artifacts, including redefined job descriptions, training agendas, and multiple samples of tools, protocols, and routine work that supervisors used. Additionally, Goldring et al. (2018) employed iterative coding techniques to analyze the interview transcripts and documents gathered from the targeted districts. To procure powerful results, the qualitative data was integrated with the quantitative data generated from the surveys.

The final stage of the study encapsulated the following major findings: (1) districts were able to revise the roles and expectations of supervisors to focus on supporting and improving the leadership practices of principals in schools; (2) most districts reduced the span of control to enable supervisors to spend more time with principals for coaching and supervising; (3) districts conducted unique professional development sessions dedicated to expanding the capacity of supervisors in their tasks of coaching and supporting principals; (4) only three districts launched fully developed

apprenticeship programs with the specific intent of preparing school principals for the position of principal supervisor; and (5) districts made tremendous efforts to strengthen central office structures to underpin changes in the roles of principal supervisors.

Despite the accomplishments they observed throughout their research, Goldring et al. (2018) found that districts still faced challenges implementing ISP, such as clarifying and narrowing the focus for the principal supervisor role, engaging other divisions of the central office in the work, and making changes reflecting the unique context of each district. Based on the results, Goldring et al. (2018) added a warning for the future that districts ought to balance their expectations for supervisors with their actual capacities, provide differentiated support, cultivate a system with a consistent quality of supervisory practices, and establish high-quality, job-embedded professional development. Finally, Goldring et al. (2018) concluded that districts needed to address succession planning and apprenticeship programs to identify and train aspiring principals to be future principal supervisors.

In Honig's research of 2012, the importance of examining the work of central office administrators was stressed (2012). One initial core objective of the research was to examine the support and supervision central office administrators undertook to strengthen principals' instructional leadership capacity and explore conditions that either helped or impeded the process. This was done through a qualitative case study design focused on three urban school districts, namely Atlanta Public Schools, New York City Public Schools, and Oakland Unified School District. For that purpose, Honig (2012) interviewed 283 central office administrators, supplemented with 265 observation hours in the field and the thorough reviewing of over 200 documents to triangulate the findings.

The sociocultural learning theory and cognitive theories served as conceptual frameworks to analyze and help define implemented practices and how central office administrators work with principals.

Honig's (2012) research revealed that central office administrators differed in how they engaged with principals; while some supervisors' practices appeared consistent, focused, and differentiated to supporting the instructional leadership skills needed per individual principals, others revealed the opposite—inconsistent, unfocused, and undifferentiated. Honig (2012) found that the major challenge among central office administrators was the lack of formal definitions articulating their work. This oversight forced those in that position to be hardwired to their past experiences, prior knowledge, and earlier orientations and trainings.

Arriving at similar findings to those of Honig (2012) and Casserly et al. (2013), Corcoran et al. (2013) focused their research in examining the ways in which principal supervisors were selected, supported, and evaluated across the United States. Although 41 districts were chosen for the study, the number of interviewees was not specifically mentioned, except that they were composed of superintendents, principal supervisors, deputies, principal coaches, curriculum directors, and other staff. In addition to individual interviews, Corcoran et al. (2013) conducted site visits, focus-group interviews, and document analyses. It was reported that each principal supervisor oversaw 24 schools on average—with a median of 18. Furthermore, the bigger the district, the larger the number of principals assigned to principal supervisors.

Key findings from the Corcoran et al. study included the following: not all principal supervisors received rigorous training and consistent professional development

for their supervisory practices; principal supervisors were evaluated differently across

districts; responsibilities and roles for principal supervision broadly varied across districts

and, in most cases, delegated across central office departments—making coordination

and communication a challenge; and principal supervisors, aside from their supervision

responsibilities, had difficulty setting aside adequate time to regularly visit schools

because of the heavy workload demanded by the central office.

Corcoran et al. (2013) suggested that states and districts should clearly define and

communicate the roles and responsibilities of principal supervisors and provide sufficient

professional development training to improve their supervisory skills. Moreover,

allocating reasonable time for meeting, shadowing, observing, counseling, and evaluating

principals is critical in amplifying the effectiveness of supervision embedded in the

principal evaluation (Corcoran et al., 2013).

Most of the studies reviewed regarding principal evaluation and supervision in

this section exhibit various weaknesses that may be attributed to combined factors, such

as methodological limitations, small sample size, and a single data collection method.

Despite these individual limits, the evidence concurs similarly. After reviewing and

analyzing all research studies on principal supervision and evaluation, the researcher

came to the following conclusions:

1. Extant literature suggests principal supervision and evaluation are perceived by

    principals as superficial and provide little, if any, helpful feedback on how to

    improve leadership practices (Abu Risq, 2012; Davis et al., 2011; Fuller et al.,

    2015; Goldring et al., 2009).

2. Many researchers have found that evaluations remain simplistic and continue to use checklists to assess principal performance (Abu Risq, 2012; Davis et al., 2011; Goldring et al., 2009; Yavuz, 2010).

3. The purposes for evaluations are often mixed, with some focusing on improving practices, while others center on both improving practices and principal accountability (Catano & Stronge, 2007; Fuller et al., 2015; Goldring et al., 2009).

4. There is significant incongruence among principals and their evaluators regarding perceived expectations, processes, and outcomes of evaluations. This may prevent it from achieving the main goals for which evaluations are established (Goldring et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2000).

5. Many of the evaluation systems are not inherently mirrored with the established national standards for principals (Abu Risq, 2012; Hvidston et al., 2016; Catano & Stronge, 2007; Davis et al., 2011; Goldring et al., 2009; Yavuz, 2010).

6. Despite the assurances of states that their principal evaluation plans will guarantee valid and reliable results, the existing measures used cannot accurately measure the impact or effectiveness of principals. Thus, using such results to guide high-stake decisions may incur unwanted consequences (Fuller et al., 2015).

7. The content and methods employed for assessing principals vary widely across districts and states, perhaps because of a given dearth of research in this area (Goldring et al., 2009).

8. When the evaluation process is realized and applied as a formative process (not an event) where opportunities to collaborate, dialogue, and reflect on practices, principals can improve their practices (Parylo et al., 2012; Zepeda et al., 2016).

9. Sound principal evaluations hardly thrives with poor implementation of principal supervisors (Hvidston et al., 2016; Kimball et al., 2009; Yavuz, 2010).

10. Too often, districts lack continual training programs based on principal supervision and evaluation for supervisors to help school leaders make a difference in their school building (Casserly et al., 2013; Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig, 2012).

11. Neither specific training nor useful guidelines were endorsed to help principal supervisors with their supervising responsibilities (Corcoran et al, 2013). Only one study found unique training programs implemented, but the quality of supervisory practices was inconsistent throughout (Goldring et al., 2018).

12. Many have a tendency toward shifting the supervisor's roles in a manner more aligned with supporting principal development and instructional leadership instead of monitoring compliance (Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012).

13. Principal supervisors face challenges due to unclear roles and responsibilities, compounded by competing demands from the central office (e.g., planning, policy meetings, and handling administrative oversight responsibilities related to the operation of schools) that infringe on time to coach and support principals (Casserly et al., 2013; Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig, 2012).

14. The responsibilities, roles, and practices of principal supervisors differ from one district to another with no formally written and defined roles guiding them in their work (Casserly et al., 2013; Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig, 2012).

15. Principal supervisors working in large districts were often assigned to large numbers of principals (Corcoran et al., 2013). However, a few districts were able to reduce the span of control and minimize the number of assignments for principal supervisors (Goldring et al., 2018).

16. Almost no research was conducted on how the evaluative and supervisory practices actually improve the professional learning of principals (Davis et al., 2011; Goldring et al., 2009).

Studies from the United States and other international studies on principal supervision and evaluation (including Canada, China, Egypt, Saudi Arabian, Turkey, and Palestine), indicate that Canada is performing and facing similar issues as the U.S. in some districts: misaligning the evaluation instruments to national standards of principals, different views among educators regarding the purposes of evaluation, and different variations of methods for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of principals.

Many research studies, though considered limited, have addressed critical issues in relation to evaluations and supervision in the U.S. and Canada. There is also growing research focusing on reviewing state and district evaluation planning, instruments, and measurement approaches selected to gauge the effectiveness of school leaders. It is apparent that there are oscillating findings within the studies conducted across the U.S context, indicating that not all states and school districts are performing in the same

manner. Preferences of policy practices with respect to principal evaluation and supervision vary from one state to another, thus yielding different results and practices.

In contrast, studies related to China are more comparative studies meant only to draw attention to the effective features and differences between the U.S and China. However, the supervision and evaluation systems in Middle eastern countries have just surfaced the topic of evaluation and supervision. Many researchers call for the demolishment of the old evaluation system and suggest new framework. Many of these concerns are summarized in the following: the evaluation instruments were not matched to the job description of principals; the evaluation system was comprehensively implemented in all school levels yet did not address the school's individual needs; principals were evaluated based on seniority rather than actual performance; and principals felt subordinate and unable to openly discuss or challenge their supervisors in the hierarchical organizational structures. Additionally, no indication of different measures or methods to evaluate the effectiveness of principals was present; rather, it was one supervisory visit using an outdated checklist of principal behaviors.

A review of literature reveals multiple studies exploring different aspects of the principal supervision and evaluation. However, the literature on the effect of evaluative and supervisory practices on instructional leadership improvement is limited. Furthermore, very few studies discuss the evaluation process from the developmental supervision and adult learning theories lens.

Appendix A provides a summary of empirical findings in the areas of principal supervision and evaluation. These findings highlight the need for additional research addressing current practices in the evaluation process; the relationship between selected

supervisory approaches and leadership improvement; and understanding these

relationships within a supervisory school setting. Findings from these studies provided

guidance for the research study conducted in the Al-Ain public school district in the

UAE.

The work of principals is primary to student success. To be effective in their job

performance, principals need a sound evaluation system along with rigorous supervision

and guidance that steer them toward excellence. This chapter has examined that concept.

Now, the focus is directed to chapter three, in which research methods are examined.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research on the principalship stressed that the roles and responsibilities of school principals have shifted over the past three decades (Catano & Stronge, 2007; Stronge, 1993; Whitaker, 2003; Zepeda, 2013). This shift has been the movement of principals from being responsible for managing school buildings to being instructional leaders primarily accountable for student achievement (Cascadden, 1998; Lyons, 1999; Normore, 2004; Zepeda, Parylo, & Klar, 2017). However, to ensure that the quality of instructional leadership remains constant, and even improves, among school leaders, it is critical that school districts adopt a solid, reliable, and effective evaluation system capable of measuring the effectiveness of principals' performance and professional learning (Parylo et al., 2012; Stronge, 2013a).

Nevertheless, such an evaluation system cannot thrive without inspired, knowledgeable, and dedicated evaluators (Mattingly, 2003) who can provide the appropriate direction for principal learning throughout the evaluation process (Zepeda & Lanoue, 2017). Given the scarcity of research in existing literature about leadership evaluation and supervision (Davis et al., 2011; Goldring et al., 2009; Parylo et al., 2012; Zepeda et al., 2016) and with no such research in the UAE, this study is focused on examining current principal evaluation practices and supervisory approaches.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the principal evaluation processes and supervisory practices that cluster managers (evaluators) and principals follow

throughout the academic year. This study explored the perspectives of principals and cluster managers on the principal evaluation practices and nature of supervision in the second largest school district in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, that of Al-Ain.

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. How is the principal evaluation process conducted as described and experienced by public school principals in Al-Ain city?

2. What are the supervisory approaches selected by cluster managers in the principal evaluation process?

3. In what ways do the supervisory approaches employed by cluster managers help principals sustain growth and development?

Conceptual and Interpretive Framework

Given the importance of linking professional learning to evaluation and supervisory processes, this study sought to examine whether the supervisory practices were designed in ways that promoted growth for principals. As such, the conceptual framework of this study drew from theories in the fields of evaluation and supervision, namely developmental supervision (Glickman, 1981; Glickman et al., 2017; Zepeda, 2017), differentiated supervision (Glatthorn, 1990; Zepeda, 2017), and adult learning theories (Conlan et al., 2003; Knowles, 1984; Langer & Applebee, 1986). In this research, the interpretive framework is grounded in a social constructivism paradigm described by Creswell and Poth (2017) as "paradigms or beliefs that the researcher brings to the process of research, or they may be theories or theoretical orientations that guide the practice or research" (p. 22).

Social constructivism is often recognized among scholars of qualitative work as interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mertens, 2015), where individuals seek understanding of the world through the development of subjective meanings for their experiences. As Elkind (2005) put it, "reality is a product of human intelligence interacting with experience in the real world" (p. 334). Because constructivism was built into this study, it was essential to consider the philosophical assumptions—epistemology, ontology, and axiology——as key premises that are rooted in the interpretive framework used in qualitative research (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

First, epistemology points to how knowledge is gained (Crotty, 1998). Such knowledge, per constructivism, is socially constructed rather than objectively determined (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001; Hirschman, 1985). In this sense, reality is constructed between the researcher and participants, and it is formed by individual experiences. Thus, the participants of this study and the researcher were interdependent and reciprocally interactive, as Hudson and Ozanne (1988) advised. Furthermore, coming to the field with prior knowledge of the research context, the researcher did not believe it to be enough for developing fixed research due to the complex and unpredictable nature of what is perceived as reality (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988).

Second, ontology refers to one's view of reality. However, from a constructivist point-of-view, reality is multi-faceted and relative (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Lincoln and Guba (1985) elucidated that multiple realities are contingent on other systems for meaning, making it much more difficult to interpret them in terms of a fixed standard (Neuman, 2000). For that reason, constructivism avoids firm structural frameworks and

adopts more flexible research structures capable of capturing varied meanings in human interaction and in making sense of what is perceived as reality (Black, 2006; Carson et al., 2001).

Third, axiology refers to the role of values placed on knowledge and research. From a constructivist standpoint, all research is value-bound and must be realized as such to be fully appreciated. Creswell and Poth (2017) emphasized, "individual values are honored and are negotiated among individuals" (p. 35). In conforming with such principles, the researcher gave specific attention to the uniqueness of the individual (Collins, 2010). Ultimately, the researcher gained insight during the research process by arming himself with a constructivist point-of-view to explore the richness, depth, complexity, and constructed meanings that individuals held about the phenomena in a school system in Abu Dhabi (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Qualitative Research

The reason behind choosing qualitative inquiry for this study is mirrored by the research questions and the study's purpose: to investigate the principal evaluation processes and supervisory practices that cluster managers (evaluators) and principals follow throughout the academic year. Undeniably, this study possesses specific features of qualitative inquiry (Stake, 2010). In fact, it was interpretive in its general nature; situational in its focus on the context of public schools within one large district in Abu Dhabi; and personalistic in its contingency on the analysis of individual perceptions of the principals and cluster managers who participated in this study.

Merriam (1998) emphasized that qualitative inquiry seeks to discover and unravel phenomena, processes, perspectives, or individuals' world views that are under study.

The use of qualitative methods aided the researcher in the same ways Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested: "in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 6). Qualitative research was employed to understand, construct, and interpret the essential meaning of the principal evaluation process and supervisory approaches generated from principles and cluster managers.

Qualitative research inquiry has the potential to answer research questions, such as 'whats,' 'whys,' and 'hows' (Ritchie et al., 2014). Moreover, according to Patton (2015), qualitative research is geared to provide an in-depth and interpretive understanding of the social world of research participants by looking deeply into the sense they make of their social sphere, experiences, perspectives, and histories. As a result, qualitative research enabled the researcher of this study to explore and examine contemporary situations where little is known about the target topic (evaluation and supervision), the key players involved (school principals and cluster managers), and to determine whether evaluative and supervisory approaches promoted adult learning (Gillham, 2000).

Naturally, a qualitative inquiry best aligned with the objectives for this study because this approach, as explained by scholars, is a process of detective work (Patton, 2015). Qualitative inquiry allows for an ongoing hunt of concepts, patterns, and emerging themes that, when taken together, provide an optimal explanation of what is occurring in the inquiry (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). Apart from this, the analysis of qualitative research embedded in the process is touted for its perceived superiority in craftsmanship, thereby yielding a rich, detailed understanding of the phenomenon and identifying,

navigating, exploring, and describing its parameters (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Finally, qualitative research provides full-package research gear for analyzing the perceptions of principals and cluster managers via employment of one of the most commonly used qualitative research methods worldwide—the case study (Merriam, 1998; Simon, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014).

The Case Study

A case study was selected as the research method. Although the case study is considered by Yin (2014) and many others as "one of the most challenging of all social science endeavors" (p. 3), this method aligned with the purpose and the objectives of this study. Yin (2014) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 16).

In doing a case study, there is no lone-standing formula; however, Yin (2014) underscored several conditions that required consideration to properly situate a case study as a research method: (1) the ultimate focus of research questions is to explain why and how the phenomenon works; (2) the researcher has no control over the individuals involved in the study; (3) the inclusion of contextual conditions must be relevant to the phenomenon under study; and (4) the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident. As a general principle, the more the researcher can meet these conditions, the more likely the case study research method is relevant and suitable (Yin, 2014; Yin & Davis, 2007).

The case-study research method bears several characteristics and advantages that make it more appropriate than other research methods for this study. First, the case study facilitates exploration of specific phenomena within its context by using multiple data sources to ensure that the issue is not examined through a single lens (Merriam, 1998). Also, as Yin (2014) reiterated, the unique strength of the case study is its ability to triangulate evidence by considering multiple types of data sources obtained from the field, such as interviews, documents, artifacts, or observations—more than typically obtained from conventional historical studies. Patton (2015) added that case studies increase credibility, regardless of the minimal sample size, through the insights, meaningfulness, and validity derived from the cases selected—though more importantly, the rigorous analytical techniques and skills of the researcher.

The case study additionally enables researchers to examine data closely within a specific context; and it is deemed appropriate for this study because it contributes to the reader's understanding of not only individuals, but also of processes of event, project flows, programs, and characteristics that focus on specific issues (Sanders, 1981; Yin, 2014). Stake (1995) further indicated that the study of one or more particular cases may capture the complexity and an in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon, limiting the scope of the research to facilitate and yield an extensive construction of detailed and rich data.

Essentially, the type of case study design selected for this study was a multi-case design that enables the researcher to closely examine multiple cases within a single context. Herriott and Firestone (1983) pointed out the evidence gleaned from multiple cases is often more compelling and powerful than focusing on a single case, rendering the

overall quality of the study more robust; however, with a caveat that such robustness, as added by Yin (2014), requires tremendous efforts, extensive resources, and considerable time. For the most part, this multiple case study is classified as descriptive, focused, and detailed, presenting a full, rich description of the phenomenon within the boundary of its context (DeVaus, 2001).

The design is intrinsic in nature, with considerable attention given to exploring and recounting the particulars of the case, rather than building a theory or asserting generalizations (Stake, 2010). This combination is intended to explore and gain more in-depth information about the principal evaluation process and supervision practiced within the context of the Al-Ain public schools. Such exploration is accompanied by an impetus to know more about the uniqueness of each case. However, prior to this, the characteristics of the case study research must be defined through delimiting the object of study (Merriam, 1998).

A case and units of analysis are important to be identified. According to Yin (2014), the tentative definition of the case and the unit of analysis are closely related to the construction of the research questions. With that in mind, each case of the multi-case design was defined as a school principal or cluster manager with a total number of nine cases (six principals and three cluster managers). The unit of analysis were focused on the supervisory and evaluative practices in which each case experienced during the principal evaluation process.

In addition to defining the case and unit of analysis, within-case and cross-case analyses were employed in this study to examine collected data. First, a within-case analysis was used to illuminate the in-depth exploration of each case as a stand-alone

entity. Then, a cross-case analysis was used to examine and refine themes, similarities, and differences across all cases (Patton, 2015). Eventually, this combination revealed the breadth and depth of information generated both individually and collectively to bring a clear-cut image of how the principal evaluation process was conducted and experienced as described by school principals and cluster managers.

Along with the design, the researcher proposed the case study research process before the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Georgia, which granted the permission needed to conduct the study (see Appendix B). See the process as illustrated in Figure 3.1. This figure shows the research process of this study at various stages. Adapted from *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Yin, 2014, p. 2).
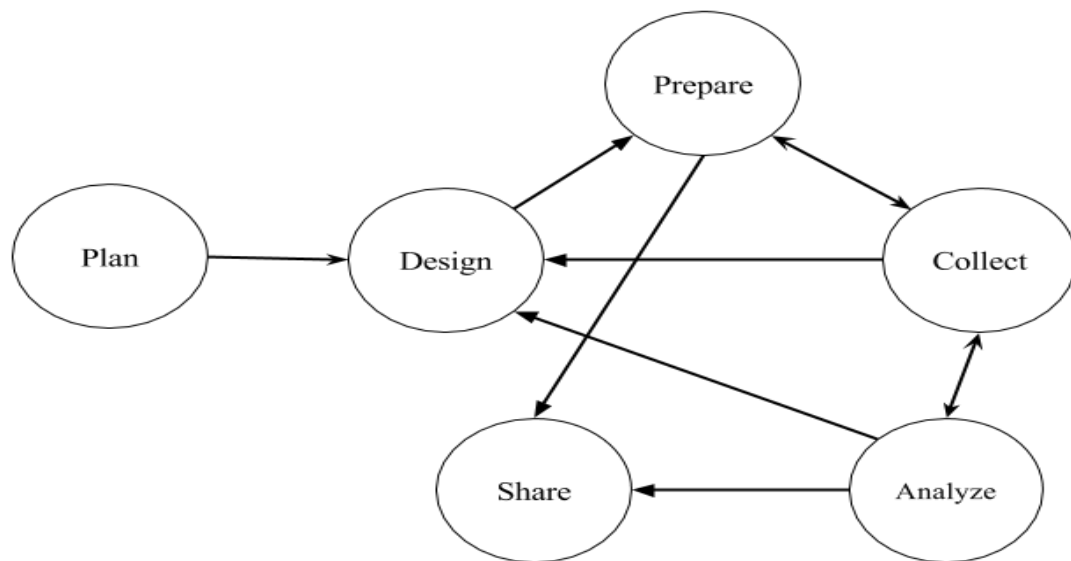
Figure 3.1. Research Process Flowchart

Each phase is explained in more detail as follows:

- Plan
    - o Identify research questions

- - Determine whether the research method (i.e., case study) is suitable compared to other research methods by examining the twofold definitions of case study
  - Evaluate strengths and weaknesses
- Design
  - Define the case and unit of analysis
  - Use theories to guide the study (i.e., developmental supervision, differentiated theory, and adult learning theories)
  - Identify the case study design
- Prepare
  - Develop case study protocol
  - Obtain IRB approval
- Collect and review data
  - Follow the established case study protocol
  - Use multiple data sources for data collection
    - Interviews
    - Document Analysis
    - Field notes
  - Collect data through a comprehensive case study to create a data base
  - Keep chain of evidence
- Analyze
  - Implement constant comparative method
  - Hunt for patterns and themes
  - Review
  - Participant review of interview transcription to ensure the accuracy of realities and perceptions of participants (member checks)
  - Peer debriefings to check for bias
  - Draw conclusion
  - Present evidence
  - Compose textual materials using themes across the data
- Share

o   Orient the study report to the audience's needs

o   Review and recompose until done

A step-by-step flowchart provided an organized method to attend each phase of the

research and enabled the researcher to engage with clear direction throughout the

research process. Furthermore, the flowchart served as a compass navigating the study,

providing the peer-reviewers with methodical structure for auditing purposes.

The Research Site

Site Selection

The selection of the site for this case study was directed by the nature of the

research. Gathering data and analyzing the background information about suitable school

systems was the first step in selecting the research site (Stake, 2010). After the research

phase, a site was selected, namely the city of Al-Ain, which is considered the second

largest school district in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The Al-Ain school district operates

103 schools and serves 55,883 students, as of the 2017-2018 school year.

Table 3.1

System Description of Three Districts Supervised by ADEC

Zone (District)	Number of schools	Number of students	Number of Principals	Number of Cluster Managers
Abu Dhabi	116	66,513	117	48
Al-Ain	103	55,883	103	12
Al-Gharbia	31	9,780	26	0
Grand Total	250	132,176	246	60

The following criteria were key factors in selecting the research site: located in

Al-Ain, operated by Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), size, easy access to urban

and rural schools, and possession of a higher pool of different nationalities and

backgrounds among school leaders. As reminder, the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) is the leading body for education in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. ADEC has full educational authority over the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, which includes the city of Al-Ain and the western region known as Al-Gharbia (Pierson, 2011).

Prior to collecting data, initial contact was made with ADEC's research office to explain the research project; gain possible background information about the Al-Ain school district; receive official permission (see Appendix C) to easily enter public schools and meet with participants; obtain a signed letter of consent; and start forging participant rapport. Pseudonyms were assigned to ensure protection of the participants and their corresponding schools.

Site Description

The Al-Ain public school principals lead different school cycles (levels). First, Cycle I include students grades one to five, usually in gender-segregated settings. Some newer schools include Cycle I students in mixed-gender settings. Second, Cycle II includes students grades six to nine always in same, gender-segregated settings. Third, Cycle III includes students grades 10 to 12 always in same, gender-segregated settings.

However, in general, ADEC operates and supervises the Al-Ain district schools and is charged with key functions associated with recruiting, paying, preparing, developing, and retaining human capital—a burden partially lifted from school principals. As illustrated in Table 3.1, the number of school principals is commensurate with the number of schools, whereas the number of cluster managers is less than a quarter thereof. ADEC assigns a specific number of cluster managers to work closely with 10 to 15 principals to provide the needed guidance, consultation, supervision, and evaluation.

Recruitment and Sample Size

In this study, participants were recruited through purposeful sampling techniques (Patton, 2015). Purposeful sampling entails selecting qualified individuals who are well-versed and experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) indicated key factors to be considered while using purposeful sampling, namely the availability and willingness of participants involved in the study. They also stressed the importance of their ability to clearly articulate experiences and thoughts in an expressive and reflective manner (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979).

The end goal of purposeful sampling is to assure credibility—although not necessarily the acquisition of representativeness (Patton, 2015). Purposeful sampling can function at an optimum especially after determining the selection criteria that are important in choosing the most fit individuals for the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this case, a specific design of purposeful sampling was employed, namely criterion sampling—in which a requirement checklist was used to select candidates for the sample (Patton, 2015). Each participant went through a vetting process and had to meet the following criteria to be considered for this study:

1. Currently experiencing the same evaluation process and supervision in the region established by ADEC;

2. Having experienced evaluation and supervision at least three years;

3. Having a cluster manager charged with evaluative and supervisory roles; and

4. Being willing to share and contribute in reflective conversations about personal practices and experiences.

The following criteria was established to select cluster managers:

1. Currently undertaking the role of a principal supervisor and evaluator in the same region;

2. Experiencing the same evaluation and supervision for more than two years; and

3. Willingness to provide reflective conversations related to their personal experiences with the evaluative and supervisory processes.

There is no consensus on the desired sample size for a case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, nine potential participants were interviewed: six principals (three female Emirates and three male Emirates) and three cluster managers (two female Americans and one male Canadian). A two-hour interview was conducted with each of the participants to provide further information, identify data redundancies, and reach saturation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Each group of principals represented a whole school cycle—one principal for Cycle I; second principal for Cycle II; and third principal for Cycle III. In this way, the data generated from different school cycles would capture useful and distinctive data on how differently the evaluation process and supervision were implemented and accommodated (if at all) to the needs of principals in different cycles that otherwise could not be ascertained (Patton, 2015).

With the support of the ADEC research office, the researcher obtained a list of potential principals and cluster managers from the Al-Ain district and emailed the list with brief background information about the project and expectations of participants who wished to be involved. As participants showed a desire to participate via email, the researcher responded to each explaining the research project with an electronic copy of

the consent letter for them to review and sign as a confirmation of their participation (see Appendix D). Table 3.2 outlines the gender, school level, years of experience, final evaluation score, and school evaluation score of principals and Table 3.3 displays the roles of the cluster mangers.

Male and female principals were equal in terms of number of participants, gender, national origin (Emiratis), and number of cycles (elementary, middle, and high school). Furthermore, a 12-year difference in principal administrative experience existed between the least experienced (14 years) and the most veteran principal (26 years). Due to the preference of new principals not to participate in this study, the researcher remained focused on those with at least three years of experiences with the current principal evaluation and supervision as defined in the selection criteria.

Table 3.2

Overview of School Principals (All Names are Pseudonyms)

Participants	Gender	Years of Experience as a Principal	School Level	Evaluation Score	School Evaluation Score
Salama	Female	18	Cycle I	Accomplished	B
Nora	Female	23	Cycle II	Exemplary	A
Shamsa	Female	17	Cycle III	Exemplary	A
Majed	Male	18	Cycle I	Accomplished	A
Ali	Male	26	Cycle II	Accomplished	B
Sultan	Male	14	Cycle III	Accomplished	D

Unlike school principals, the study's cluster manager selection was more cycle-oriented (elementary, middle, and high school levels) and female-dominant. While several cluster managers agreed to participate prior to beginning the study, they later

withdrew prior to the appointed interview because of changes in their school schedules or upcoming urgent matters. As shown in Table 3.3., the years of experience of cluster managers in evaluating and supervising principals in the Al-Ain district ranged from three to six years. Each cluster manager led one cycle and had a different number of assigned principals to supervise and evaluate.

Table 3.3

Overview of Cluster Managers (All Names are Pseudonyms)

Participants	Gender	Nationality	Years of Experience as a Cluster Manager	School Level Assigned	Number of Principals Assigned
Jennifer	Female	American	3	Cycle I	9
Maria	Female	American	4	Cycle II	8
Benner	Male	Canadian	6	Cycle III	15

The following section explores the data collection methods of the study, namely interviews, documents, and field notes. Each method is discussed in detail as it applies throughout the data collection process.

Data Collection Methods

To achieve a high-quality case study, Yin (2014) called for researchers to be mindful of three major principles as they proceed with the data collection phase: (1) examine each phenomenon using multiple data sources; (2) establish a case study database; and (3) keep a chain of evidence. As Yin (2014) described, six sources of evidence are commonly and widely used in doing case-study research: documents, archival records, physical artifacts, interviews, direct observations, and participant observations. Nevertheless, no sole source can occupy full advantage over all the others;

rather, reliance on various data sources can be highly complementary, emphatically

leading to what is called "the development of converging lines inquiry" (Yin, 2014, p.

120). For this case study, interviews, documents, and field notes were chosen as data

sources because of their appropriateness within the research setting. Each data source is

described and explained in further detail in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Data Collection Methods

Source of Data	Description
Interviews	One interview guideline was used: • Principal evaluation process • Principal supervision
Documents	Examples of collected documents: • Principal evaluation instruments • Principal self-evaluation form • Professional standards for principals • Professional development sessions • Job descriptions • Meeting agendas • E-mail communication
Field Notes	Written accounts of the experiences and thoughts of the researcher during data collection.
Memos	Reflections of the researcher regarding data analysis.

The strength of the case study as a research methodology lies within its utilization of

multiple data collection methods to capture as many variables as possible, adding in-

depth information and gaining deeper understanding of the phenomenon under

investigation. This process underpins the link between triangulation and data saturation

(Fusch & Ness, 2015).

To gather more in-depth information about the evaluation processes and supervisory practices, interviews were used as the primary collection data type for this case study. As Seidman (2012) discussed, the purpose of interviews is not to test hypotheses; rather, it is to understand the experiences of other people, and to make sense of them. Kvale (1997), along similar lines, highlighted the purpose of qualitative interviewing as an effort to describe the meaning of central themes in the world of each participant. Equally important, researchers should have authentic interest in those with whom they speak. Such interest should be integrated throughout the entirety of the interviewing process. In achieving this purpose, attention to oneself as an interviewer must be excised from the picture and replaced with attention given to the interviewee (Seidman, 2012).

Each leader participated in an in-depth interview that occurred in face-to-face mode setting for approximately two hours with the aim of obtaining data about leaders' unique perspective, specifically focusing on their experiences in relation to evaluative processes and supervisory practices embedded in the principal evaluation. To pose critical interview questions that extract detailed, yet essential, information from the participants, knowledge of the phenomenon is required (Kvale, 1996). Therefore, immersion into literature precedes learning more about the principal evaluation process and supervision, thus reducing uncertainty before encountering participants during the interviews.

Moreover, the interviews conducted in this study were semi-structured to allow for flexibility and natural flow, yet keeping the conversation focused on the overarching

purpose. The semi-structured interview leaves autonomy for the researcher to bring forth critical new questions that might add to or replace the pre-determined ones—an opportunity to better explore a particular domain of the topic being discussed (Glesne, 1999). The protocol of this semi-structured interview, specifically designed for principals and cluster managers, functions as a guide that allows for creativity and flexibility to guarantee that each administrator's story is fully examined and uncovered in his or her own words within the school and evaluation settings. Table 3.5 presents a sample of interview questions used when interviewing school principals regarding evaluation practices and the nature of supervision.

Table 3.5

Sample of Interview Questions for School Principals

Questions Related to Evaluation
- What are the criteria under which you are evaluated?   - How clear are the particular details under each criterion? Explain more.   - To whom might you go to seek help if any of the given criteria are unclear?   - Would you single out one or more criteria as unfair? Give reasons for each one you think is unfair.   - Describe what a typical evaluation session conducted by your cluster manager would look like.   - Based on your experience, what would you say are the strengths of your principal evaluation process? Weaknesses?
Questions Related to Supervision
- What kind of conversations take place between you and your cluster manager during each visit?   - Based on the sessions you have had with your cluster manager, how do you perceive the supervision implemented during the process?   - What do you think about your cluster manager's knowledge and expertise in supporting you in the process?   - Describe ways your supervisor supports or helps you sustain growth and development.   - When you have a supervisory session with your cluster manager regarding any problem or issue in your school building, how is it tackled between you and him/her?

Table 3.6 presents a sample of interview questions specifically designed for cluster

managers who supervise and evaluate Emirate school principals.

Table 3.6

Sample of Interview Questions for Cluster Managers

Questions Related to Evaluation
- How clear are the particular details under each criterion?   - How do the evaluation criteria and expectations align with principals' work in schools?   - What sources of evidence are the principals required to collect during the evaluation process?   - Would you describe the evaluation process as formative or summative? Please explain.   - What factors do you consider when you evaluate principals at the end of the year?   - What are the subsequent decisions and actions that might occur if the principal received a low evaluation?
Questions Related to Supervision
- How different are your supervisory approaches when coaching new principals, as opposed to those with more experience?   - What factors do you consider when selecting your developmental supervision style for each principal (e.g., directive, directive-informational, collaborative, non-directive, etc.)?   - How are you and your principals engaged in discussion?   - How do you think the PD sessions support principals in their work?   - What would happen if a disagreement regarding given feedback took place between you and a principal?   - How could you best support the continual improvement of your principals' performance in the evaluation process?

The complete interview guidelines (see Appendix E) for both principals and

cluster managers included protocols and directions to help set the stage throughout the

interviews, namely (a) introductory questions to help the interviewees feel more

comfortable; (b) specific, open-ended questions related to the primary research questions

that allowed the researcher to prompt an easy and friendly discussion with the

participant—this was narrowed down as the interview progressed; (c) closing questions asking the participants to add any information that he or she might feel is relevant; (d) a brief description of the next step in the research process; and (e) an expression of thanks to the participants for their time and involvement in the study, as suggested by Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora, and Mattis (2007).

Setting the interview date and time was mostly based on the desires and schedules of each participant because of their busy lives. Prior to each interview, the researcher contacted participants via email to send them consent forms to complete and let them know that the interviews would be recorded. Later, a friendly reminder was sent to inform them that the interview was voluntary, that they were not required to answer any questions they did not want to answer, and that they could end the interview at any time.

While principals preferred their interviews in their school offices, the cluster managers preferred interviews to take place in their district offices in Al-Ain. There was one exception, however, when one cluster manager insisted on having her interview at a school after she finished her supervisory work. At the beginning of the interviews, the researcher provided each participant with a brief introduction about himself, the purpose of the interview, and the goals to be discussed therein. All interviews were electronically recorded using an IC Recorder and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Furthermore, to maintain confidentiality, all identifying information from the interview was removed and supplanted with pseudonyms during the transcription process.

Documents

Adding documents as a data source to this case-study research was important to corroborate and strengthen evidence from other sources. Apart from triangulation

purposes, documents were pursued because they neither distort, nor alter, the setting in which the presence of an investigator often does; and documents are not influenced by the manipulative actions of human beings (Merriam, 1998). Yin (2014) listed several additional strengths of using documents as part of a study: they are "stable" (retrieved and reviewed repeatedly), "unobtrusive" (not a product of the case study), "specific" (inclusive of exact names and details of events), and "broad" (wide coverage of events and settings) (p. 106).

Upon the agreement of participants, various documents were collected for this research, including corresponding emails and communications (see Figure 3.2); evaluation and supervision agendas (see Figure 3.3); principal evaluation rubrics and forms (see Figure 3.4); and job descriptions of principals and cluster managers. Moreover, some documents were downloaded from ADEC's website (e.g., professional standards for principals and information pertinent to school indexes that were publicly available).
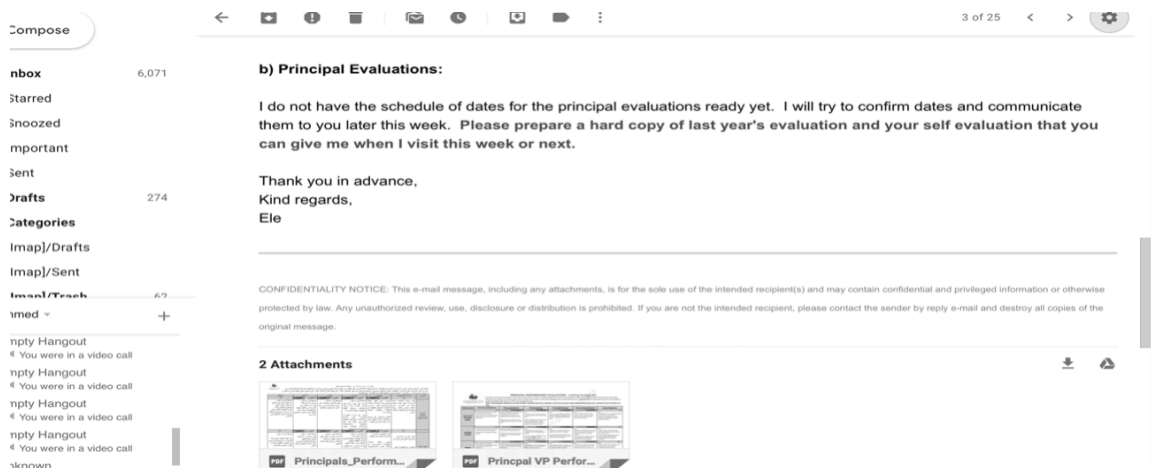

Figure 3.2. Sample Email Communication

Figure 3.2 displays an email communication from a female cluster manager to her assigned principals (Cycle I, elementary level) explaining the final evaluation meeting

procedures, providing them with the evaluation forms needed to fulfil ADEC

requirements, and confirming a later date for the meeting. Such email communications

are necessary documents that provide principals with evaluation forms that still need to

be completed and information about when evaluations will take place. Other collected

email correspondences regarded supervisory visits, updates about professional

development meetings, invitation to workshops, etc.

Another example of data collected for this study was the school calendar of best

practices, as shown in Figure 3.3. This document contains information about the monthly

professional development enacted in the evaluation process, which focuses heavily on

sharing best practices among school principals.

Week	School Name	School ID	Date (School's decision)	Topics in English Brief Description of the area	Topics in Arabic ضع نبذه مختصرة حول الممارسة المميزة	Comments	NAME OF 2 VISITING STAFF, 1 SHOULD BE THE PRINCIPAL OR/And THE VP 1. Position 2. Position	Email & contact number
16.-24.10.2017	Al Jood School		Post pond	Kagan Strategy	أستراتيجيات كيجن		1. Position 2. Position	
	Al Shaheen School		Confirmed Wed19th October	Improving Science	تطوير مادة العلوم وتحسين مخرجاتها	3 times each school to repeat /reflect and evaluate the impact of the discussion and the implication with other schools who attend	1. Position 2. Position	
	Al Ahad School			Improving Science		I am preparing a template to be completed clearly by each hosting school to be returned for CMs before 13 OCT	1. Position 2. Position	
	Hili School		Confirmed Sunday 23th October	Improving Reading Arabic /English	أثر تطوير مهارات القراءة وأنواعها متضمنة السجل القرائي قسمي اللغة العربية والإنجليزية	I would suggest either having a joint workshop with Al Shaheen and Al Ahad at Al Shaheen, or having Al Ahad in a later month. I am afraid no one will drive all the way to Al Ahad if there is a closer workshop in the same week on the same topic at Al Shaheen.	1. Position 2. Position	
	Al Alya School		Confirmed Monday 24th October	Leading Organization Policy Procedures with Clear Expectations	قيادة المؤسسة وأثر وضوح السياسات المدرسية والإجراءات ووضوح التوقعات لكل الأدوار	The information form Matt can be useful with us for the rationale and some points ,to be discussed .	1. Position 2. Position	
13.-15.11.2017	Al Somou School			Use of Data by Teachers for Planning		Term 1 Term2 Term 3 final data /report/feedback to be published as evidence of progress and measuring impact for next steps and inform our planning /improvement process of the program	1. Position 2. Position	

Figure 3.3. Schools' Calendar of Best Practices

Some documents were obtained at the outset of this study to understand the general

context of the evaluation process and supervisory practices, such as the principal

evaluation performance rubric, as illustrated in Figure 3.4.

PRINCIPAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION - Leading Strategically

Principals are the visionary leaders of the school. They work to create an understanding of the vision of learning that is shared and supported by the whole school community. They know the political and social context of their school. They create a climate that challenges the school community to continually improve learning outcomes and are adept at using all available information to inform and manage planning.

Note: All Exemplary indicators are time-framed. Achievement of an indicator at this level would need to be demonstrated over a period of not less than one year.

Element	Pre-Foundation	Foundation	Emerging	Established	Accomplished	Exemplary
Vision and Strategic Goals.	Has a personal vision for the school, and now needs to lead and implement a process for developing a shared school vision with teachers and parents.	Leads and implements a process for developing a shared vision and strategic goals that reflect clear expectations for students and staff. Maintains a focus on the vision and strategic goals throughout the school year.	And... Promotes a vision of high standards and expectations for all students and staff. Initiates collaborative changes to the vision and goals based on data, feedback & evidence, resulting in improved school performance.	And... Inspires and gains the commitment of others towards the school's vision, mission, values, and organizational goals.	And... Ensures that the school's vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals drive decisions and inform the culture of the school.	And... Is recognised as an inspirational leader by both peers and key ADEC personnel. They play key roles in shaping and guiding the Emirate's educational vision.
Leading Change	Is comfortable with the environment within which the school operates. Responds to the changes mandated by ADEC.	Identifies changes necessary for the improvement of student learning. Makes effort to introduce necessary changes supported by appropriate strategies.	And... Uses different processes and strategies to build agreement for change. Routinely engages with staff and key community members when considering ways to improve student achievement and school processes.	And... Guides others through change and addresses resistance to change. Uses feedback, data, evidence and research from a variety of sources to justify and initiate change	And... Regularly and systematically reviews and communicates the impacts of change processes to staff and parents. Understands the change processes and strategies most likely to be effective in various situations.	And... Is the driving force behind major initiatives that help students acquire 21st century skills. Systematically challenges the status quo by leading change that has potentially beneficial student outcomes.
School Planning	Data collection and analysis processes that connect to the school improvement plan (SIP) are developing.	Understands requirements regarding the SIP and oversees development of a plan that includes staff and parent involvement. Incidental use of student performance data is evident in the SIP.	And... Facilitates the successful adoption of the SIP, aligned to the schools and ADEC's mission and goals. Uses a wide range of performance data to help inform development of strategic priorities in the SIP.	And... Systematically collects, analyses, and uses a wide range of data regarding the school's progress toward strategic goals and objectives. A well established cycle of continuous improvement informs all school planning.	And... Uses extensive analysis of a broad range of school performance data, spanning more than one year, to: • Measure the school's progress • To inform the process of introducing, retaining or retiring initiatives, projects and strategies.	And... Inspires, leads and assists peers, and various other school leaders in strategic planning processes.

Figure 3.4. Sample of Principal Evaluation Rubric

The evaluation rubric consists of 18 elements or criteria that fall under five standards, forming a guide by which principals can gauge their actual performance. Figure 3.4 presents a sample page of the principal evaluation rubric for the first standard, "Leading Strategically," which includes its three criteria and categories defining the varying levels of expertise and progression. These levels include 'pre-foundation,' 'foundation,' 'emerging,' 'established,' 'accomplished,' and 'exemplary.'

In addition to the evaluation rubric, participants were asked to review their final evaluation scores and supervisor feedback. Unfortunately, however, both were given orally rather than in writing because they contained confidential information about other individuals involved in the process.

Field Notes

Field notes were the third data source used in this research. Field notes are an ongoing record of experiences and thoughts jotted down during the qualitative research period. They are created by the researcher to track the development of the project, to later visualize how data collection affected the research plan, and to keep the researcher in regular check with any possible influence on the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The first type of field notes used in this study were detailed interview notes taken during each interview session for each of the research participants. These descriptive notes supplemented the digitally recorded interview by capturing the nuances of the researcher and participants (i.e., the behaviors, non-verbal cues, assumptions, and actions) that might be useful later in the research process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Table 3.7 provides a sample from the researcher's reflective field notes, which were developed immediately after each interview with the participants.

Table 3.7

Sample of Field Notes Following Interviews

Participant	Field Notes
Benner (Cluster Manager)	Some of the participant' reactions to my questions about "consequences and decisions" related to receiving low evaluation scores quite surprised me. For example, this participant tried to shift the topic to something else or give unrelated answers as I attempted to refocus the conversation on the questions at hand. When I cornered him with a direct question about whether the principals were terminated, he paused for a few seconds with his head and eyes down and a smile on his face. First, he exclaimed, "I don't know!" but after I mentioned that he had been in the evaluation program for almost six years, he said, "If you are looking for termination, then NO, they are not terminated." The first silent pause was perhaps due to him being alarmed, causing him to think twice before disclosing such sensitive information (especially sensitive in UAE culture). He may have felt the answer would place him in jeopardy. I felt I may have over-pushed to get an answer.

Table 3.7 (Continued)

Sample of Field Notes Following Interviews

Participant	Field Notes
Jennifer (Cluster Manager)	There was a lot of back-and-forth comparing-and-contrasting between the UAE and the US in terms of their respective supervision and evaluation systems. Whatever questions I posed in the interview, this participant not only gave direct answers based on her experience in the UAE, but also provided examples and stories from her country related to many aspects within the domain of evaluation. These aspects included principal accountability, evaluator licensing, coaching, student achievement, standardized tests, etc.
Nora (School Principal)	This particular participant was so energetic and engaged in the interview that she strayed off topic several times to discuss and reflect on other matters that seemed important to her. I attempted not to redirect her immediately but gave her some time to reflect and then slipped in redirecting questions to bring her back to our main discussion. I did not want to make her lose interest in the interview by confining her to certain topics. She provided very deep information and details and the interview lasted for more than three hours.
Ali (School Principal)	This participant gave the impression of relaxation and confidence based on his non-verbal cues and body language. He really seemed to relish in reflecting on his ultimate power as a school leader, as opposed to cluster managers who were limited to counseling, suggesting, and supporting with no interfering involvement on school territory. In many segments of the interview, he referred to the roles and responsibilities of cluster managers and the little power they had over principals.
Shamsa (School Principal)	This participant seemed very open and comfortable when answering the interview questions. Unexpectedly, there were many instances where she corroborated her responses with tangible evidence and documents, even when I did not ask her to do so. For instance, when we talked about professional goals, she logged into her account and showed me her goals on the computer screen; when we talked about self-evaluation, she handed me a form showing me what her self-evaluations looked like; and when we talked about professional development, she brought out her PD calendar and pointed out all the sessions.

After each interview, the field notes—not necessarily organized in a particular manner on the interview guideline pages—were transferred into a computer file to facilitate the working process with the interview transcripts and other data.

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The second type of field notes used in this research was the reflective journal diary, in which the researcher examines personal assumptions and goals and illuminates individual belief systems and subjectivities (Ahern, 1999). Keeping reflective journals can not only trace the messiness, errors, and confusion of the research process, but can also make it visible to the researcher—a storage system that helps in the development and refinement of qualitative research (Ortlipp, 2008). Figure 3.5 contains a reflection sample from the journal that the researcher used during the research process—an exercise that promotes meaningful refinement, learning development opportunities, and accuracy.
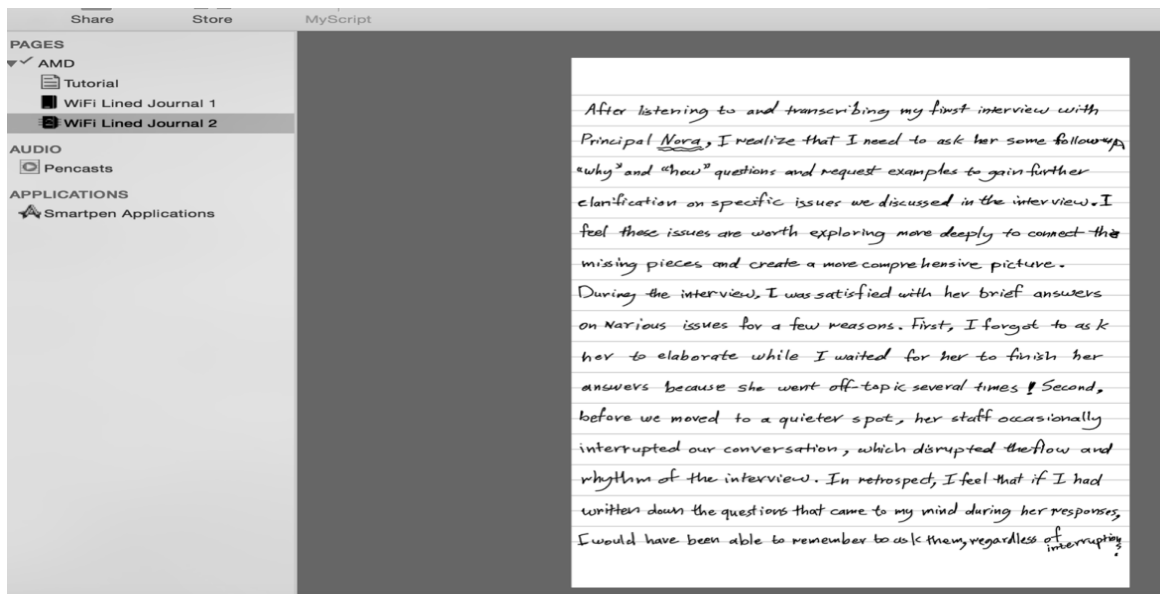
Figure 3.5. Reflection Sample from Livescribe Smart-pen Journal Entry

Merriam (2009) opined, "Reflective comments can include the researcher's feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, speculations, and working hypotheses" (p. 131). Likewise, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) added that reflective journals may address the researcher's pondering moments on the research design, analysis, methods, ethical considerations, intersected conflicts, and points of clarification. Evidently, in reviewing the literature on reflective journals, this approach is an approved

practice from constructivist, feminist, and poststructuralist perspectives (see for example, Denzin, 1994; MacNaughton, 2001), as it achieves highly methodological rigor and paradigmatic consistency (Ortlipp, 2008).

The Livescribe™ smart-pen journal diary served as a reflective research journal that the researcher carried throughout the duration of the study to ensure capture of all relevant reflections and thought processes. As a general function, the smart-pen journal diary contained a dot pattern in which handwritten notes could be converted into digital form with high speed and unerring accuracy and plugged into a computer. This advanced technology possessed the ability to record long audio files to accommodate various circumstances.

<div align="center">

Data Management

</div>

Building a data storage system for intensive case studies is essential (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Stake, 2010; Yin, 2014). In this study, all data forms—audio files, interview transcriptions, and field notes—were password-encrypted and stored in ATLAS.ti (qualitative data analysis and research software). Additionally, all identifying information was coded to protect the confidentiality of the participants from various schools. For example, a labeling system was created to provide information about audio files and field notes for easy retrieval and usage. Information included, for example, "name of file," "name of interviewer," "date of interview," and the "time of interview."

Furthermore, for auditing ease, process notes were formatted using codes. Aside from storing and managing data, the researcher used ATLAS.ti with the purpose of uncovering and systematically analyzing the complex phenomena hidden beneath the unstructured data as displayed in Figure 3.6.
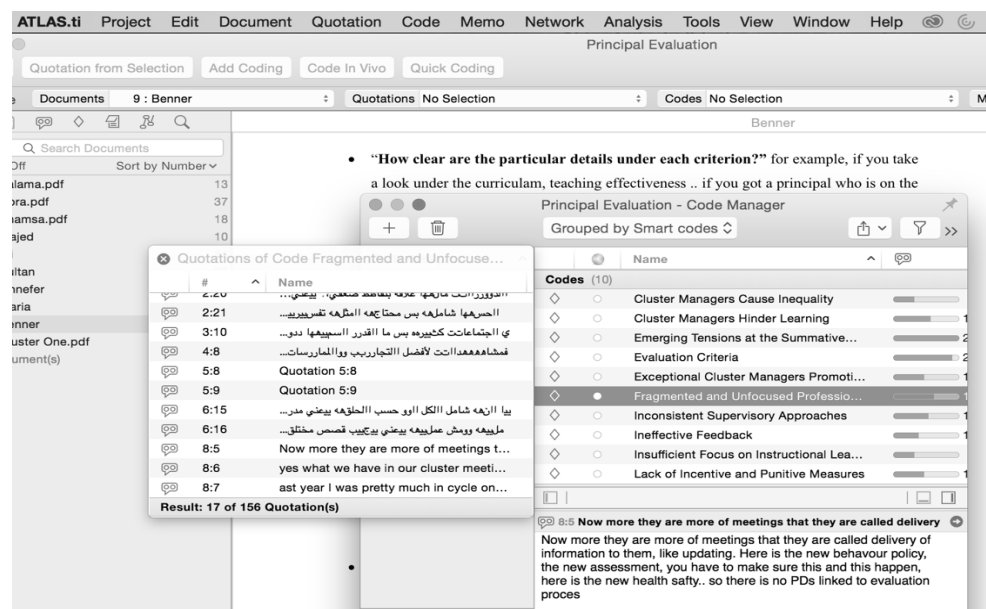
Figure 3.6. Using ATLAS.ti for Data Management and Analysis

ATLAS.ti was used as the primary storage method for all basic components of this study,

offering highly efficient control, ease, and comfort in dealing with data.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed individually, and later collectively, to sift out the most

useful information. Bryman and Burgess (1994) underscored the importance of data

analysis as an integral part of qualitative research that involves a series of steps—

detecting, defining, categorizing, theorizing, explaining, exploring, and mapping—all of

which help unravel the twisted threads of phenomena within human experiences. From

the beginning of the study to the final write-up stage, data analysis was used as an all-

encompassing process that required the close examination of data for repeating themes

and patterns.

Stake (1995) unfolded his understanding of the analysis process when he argued,

"Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final

compilations. Analysis essentially means taking something apart" (p. 71). The researcher

was mindful of attending to data analysis immediately after the first collection of data so that the emerging themes from early interviews were not lost. As a result, the researcher was able to capture the benefits of this back-and-forth process of data collection and analysis.

Given the nature of the multi-case study design, the researcher conducted both within-case and cross-case analyses. Creswell (2017) emphasized that a typical approach chosen for conducting multiple cases was to provide a rich and detailed description of each case and themes within the case (within-case analysis). This was followed by a thematic analysis across the cases (cross-case analysis) (Creswell, 2017). The reasoning behind this process was to further refine themes that captured commonalities as well as differences in the events, activities, and processes, which were the units of analysis in the case studies. Merriam (2009) summarized the process as follows:

> For the within-case analysis, each case is first treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself. Data are gathered so the researcher can learn as much about the contextual variables as possible that might have a bearing on the case. Once the analysis of each case is completed, cross-case analysis begins. (p. 204)

In accordance with these guidelines, the researcher began the analysis process by examining the data of each leader (principal and cluster manager) or case, and then concluded with an analysis that included collective examination across cases.

Constant Comparative Method

The constant comparative method was used heavily during the analysis process. This analytic approach was suitable for the study because it unraveled the complexity thereof and provided an understanding of how the principal evaluation process and

supervisory practices were conducted—as described and experienced by public school principals in the city of Al-Ain (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). At the beginning of the analysis process, the researcher immersed himself in the data by applying coding techniques since they are imperative and inherent in the constant comparative method, especially in the initial stages of analysis. These techniques helped him not only engage with the data, but also organize enormous amounts of qualitative data into manageable segments.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) defined coding as "extracting concepts from raw data and developing them in terms of their properties and dimensions" (p. 159). The first two coding techniques, used to engage the researcher with the data and break it down into different units of meaning, were the open coding and line-by-line coding techniques. Open coding involves breaking down data into different units of meaning. In applying open coding, researchers become acquainted with the data and gain a real sense of it, which shapes and determines the ensuing analysis. Table 3.8 displays some potential codes generated from a within-case analysis.

Table 3.8

List of Potential Codes from Nora's Case

Evaluation	Supervision
• Mixed interpretations of criteria • Portfolio rarely used • Mandatory self-evaluation ignored • Highly subjective judgment • Punitive measures absent	• Poor supervision • Hostile learning environment • Collaborative versus directive approach • Ineffective feedback • Universal professional development

As a rule, open coding requires a full transcription of an interview, after which the data is examined with the aim of identifying key words or phrases that link the participant's

account to the experience under study (Charmaz, 2006). Multiple potential codes were generated from each study participant within the domains of evaluation and supervision, which illustrated similarities and differences with unique narratives and experiences. Table 3.9 displays potential codes from Cluster Manager Benner.

Table 3.9

List of Potential Codes from Benner's Case

Evaluation	Supervision
• Subjective interpretation of criteria • Results-focused criteria • Rituals of summative evaluation • Self-evaluation discussion • Punitive measures absent	• Supervisory activities • Appreciative approach important • Administrative emergency triage • Specific feedback included • Shared, practice-based professional development

In contrast, line-by-line coding is the systematic breakdown of interview data, documents, and other forms of data into smaller units that are labelled to generate broader concepts or themes (Charmaz, 2006). However, coding each line may seem like a random exercise because not every line is a complete sentence, and not every sentence may be important (Glaser, 1978). Even so, this strategy aided the researcher in finding both implied and explicit information.

The following steps were implemented during the process of line-by-line coding: breaking the data up into their component properties, defining the actions on which they rested, looking for implicit assumptions, finding implicit actions and meanings, constructing the significance of each point, and identifying gaps in the research (Charmaz, 2006). Table 3.10 illustrates selected excerpts on how data was coded line-by-line during the analysis.

Table 3.10

Selected Coding Excerpt

Excerpt	Line-by-Line Coding
"It is…practice-based professional development where school principals of the whole cycle gather and shared their best practices. It could be interesting at the beginning to listen and hear different experiences and practices of different people, but at some point, it gets boring and less fulfilling because of how it is structured and not responsive to principal[s'] needs and work. Our professional development is not linked to our professional goals or based on our previous evaluation data" (Shamsa, personal communication).	Practice-based professional development Less fulfilling Not structured or responsive to principals' needs and work PD disconnected from professional goals and evaluation
"When I asked my cluster manager for consultation on a teacher who had a long history of absenteeism and who never cared or listened to what I said, [she] gladly wanted to solve the problem. She asked to arrange a meeting with the teacher to deal with her. I was happy, back then, knowing that I had support and that I was not alone in this. The cluster manager brought up this absentee teacher as a major weakness in the final evaluation! She said I relied on her to the solve problem and could not do it on my own. Wow! I was speechless at that moment! I thought it was safe to open and ask for help, but not at all. I was wrong! She was hunting for mistakes" (Nora, personal communication).	Asked for consultation Cluster manager showing support Used Nora's problem as a weakness at the summative evaluation Shocking moment Cluster manager hunting for mistakes
"Individual cluster managers use their own documents in their own system[s]. For me, I take notes and [record] dates for every time I come in (sort of what to discuss about my agenda). I let the principal know in advance. But, you know, sometimes it is more troubleshooting; like today, I will go over a few complaints that I have…with them and I [will] go around to see how they are doing with testing... Sometimes, I meet with parents that are having troubles with the school…intervening with teacher issues…it is that sort of thing. As you can see, administrative duties and tasks might take over supervisory activities!" (Jennifer, personal communication).	Shared agenda with principal in advance Administrative duties take supervision time

The researcher read through the text line-by-line and assigned a phrase to each chunk. Then, all similar segments of text were grouped together into codes, completing the coding process. The different meanings in each segment of text were used to generate the properties of each respective code. Figure 3.7 provides an example of how line-by-line coding was conducted in ATLAS.ti analysis software.
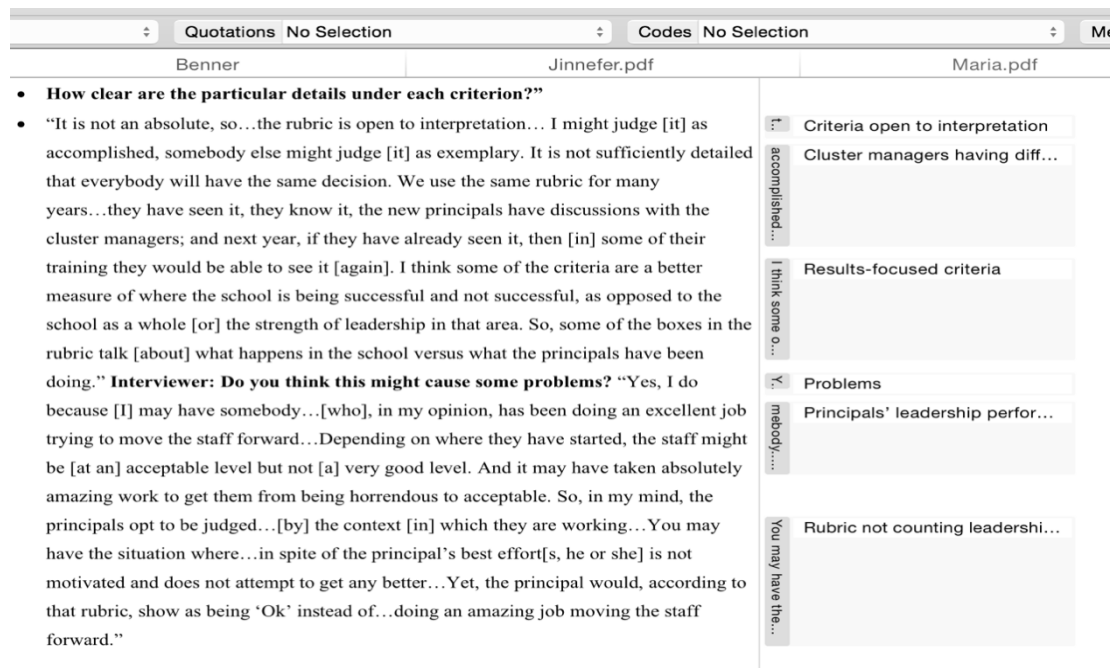
Figure 3.7. Sample of Line-by-line Coding Technique Conducted via ATLAS.ti

After conducting open coding and line-by-line coding, the constant comparative method was used to search for similarities and differences within the data, find links across the data, and identify emerging themes during the data collection and analysis phase of the research (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Schwandt (2007) expounded on this idea by portraying the constant comparative method as follows: "Each segment of the data is taken in turn and (a) compared to one or more categories to determine its relevance and (b) compared with other segments of data similarly categorized" (p. 37). Table 3.11 displays selected revised themes and codes used for cross-case analysis.

Table 3.11

Selected Samples of Themes

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Participants' Words	Themes
Impacted by their supervisory practices Impacted by their personal efforts, attitudes, and prior experiences	Cluster managers are a key ingredient to increasing or decreasing success in the evaluation process.	"Most of the time, the evaluation was horrible…few times [were] extraordinary…all dependent on the cluster managers." "Wavering in quality…unbalanced." "The quality of the evaluation process was mostly average, or below…resulting from…cluster managers." "Their supervisory skills…varied by degree with performance scattered along a continuum from 'nothing,' to 'poor,' 'average,' and 'outliers.'" "All depends on their personal efforts, attitudes toward work, and prior experiences."	**Cluster managers cause inequality in the evaluation process**
Regularly discussing issues pertinent to school management Overlooking topics related to the very core practices of instructional leadership	Supervision embedded in the process is more focused on administrative duties than instructional leadership.	"My cluster managers always sit down and have endless conversations about different topics of school management, from preparations for standardized exams, to new legislation, finance, parent and teacher complaints, and so on." "Most focused-on school management and operational duties rather than instructional leadership." "Cluster managers wasted time discussing the school's well-being, policies, and management issues for hours…ignoring topics related to instructional leadership."	**Insufficient focus on instructional leadership**
Unresponsive to principals' needs Irrelevant to principals' work Lack of supporting evidence Fragmented and disconnected from other support programs	Ineffective professional development during the evaluation process.	"One size fits all." "Very broad, boring, repetitive, and above all, unstructured." "The content does not address our school needs." "Rarely applicable to the reality of principals." "Every program is a separate entity, fragmented and disconnected from…one another."	**Fragmented and unfocused professional development**

As illustrated in Table 3.11, the researcher carefully combined and grouped the codes into their respective categories. They were accompanied by propositions and illustrations derived from participants' quotations for corroboration and verification. The constant comparative method's ultimate purpose is to sort, synthesize, and arrange substantial amounts of data in new ways after the initial coding strategies are used. A cross-case, comparative analysis was implemented and continued until data saturation was reached and the development of themes was accomplished.

To supplement the analysis process, the researcher used the memo-writing process. Memos are like journal entries in which the researcher deeply reflects about the participants, phenomena, or processes under study (Saldaña, 2013). According to Clarke (2005), memos are also dialogues between the researcher and the data. For example, the researcher might think of memos as more than just a significant word or phrase, like a trigger for deeply written reflections on certain aspects. Therefore, in a more profound sense, memo-writing is a milestone between data collection and draft-writing (Charmaz, 2006). The goal of analytic memos is for researchers to ponder over data (see figure 3.8).
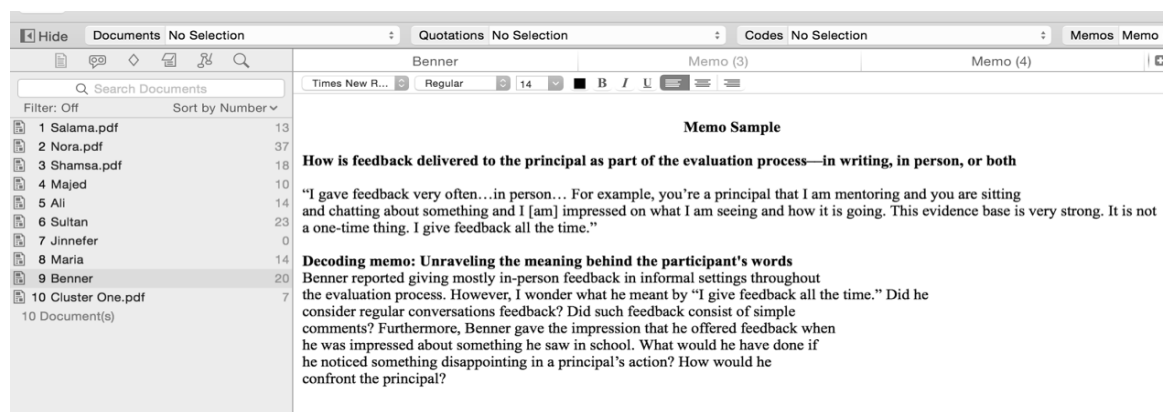

Figure 3.8. An Analytical Memo Sample Conducted via ATLAS.ti

Mason (2002) described the memo creation process in the following way: "Thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often

challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent to which your thoughts, actions, and decisions shape how you research and what you see" (p. 5). During this process, researchers may reflect on personal events related to the participants (see table 3.12), phenomena, research topic, code choices, emergent patterns and themes, possible links and overlaps among codes, ethical issues, the future direction for the study, and the final report of the study (Saldaña, 2013).

Table 3.12

Sample of Researcher's Memos

Memos	Purpose
As I reflect on the beginning of my analysis of the first cluster manager interview, I realize that I must make a slight amendment to the study's design. As I previously planned whom to invite to be interviewed, I only had two cluster managers, one supervising elementary school principal, and one middle school principal. However, after reviewing the interview transcript of the first cluster manager, I realize that I will need to conduct at least one more interview with a cluster manager who supervises at the high school level to have full coverage of all school levels. I feel like this will provide me with better insight and understanding of cluster managers' perspectives on all levels.	Sampling
It never occurred to me that one of the barriers to creating effective supervision may be principals' "invincible" professional status. This barrier is deeply rooted and has significant impact on their attitudes toward work. If principals feel that their professional status is protected by law, regardless of repeated failures and low evaluation performance, then there is no inherent value in supervision as a means for improving leadership capacity. Furthermore, this feeling may be "contagious" and cluster managers may become "infected" and begin feeling the same as principals—especially when they see their hard work is not taken seriously. I perhaps have made a huge assumption in believing that the value of evaluation and supervision is seen as reciprocal, leaving professional status out of the equation. This has critical implications.	Reflection on researcher assumptions

The memos in this study were about events, cases, categories, and their relationships to each other. However, their primary use was to stimulate the researcher's thinking in making connections to the data, as demonstrated in Figure 3.12.

Trustworthiness

There has been bitter criticism regarding the quality of case studies conducted by investigators due to cursory procedures followed, which resulted in insufficient or questionable findings (Yin, 2014). In assessing and ensuring quality data, collective measures were implemented to establish trustworthiness in the findings through the maintenance of credibility (with preference given to internal validity), dependability (in partiality to reliability), transferability (in predilection to external validity), and confirmability (in favor of objectivity) of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These terms, believed to be more suitable for qualitative research, were constructed and coined by Guba (1981), with the aim of replacing the original terms associated with quantitative research (Silverman, 2013).

Credibility, perceived as the most critical criterion in establishing trustworthiness, seeks to ensure that the study clearly links the research findings with reality to demonstrate the veracity of such findings (Weiss, 1998). Indeed, credibility—as noted earlier by Guba (1981) —is often referred to as internal validity, which is the believability and fidelity of the findings. Merriam (1998) also highlighted credibility by posing the following question, "How congruent are the findings with reality?" (p. 12). In this study, credibility was achieved through triangulation and member-checking. Seale (1999) concluded that triangulation strengthens the credibility of research by considering multiple data sources in an effort to sift through the evidence from different angles, rather than analyzing one single data source (see figure 3.9).
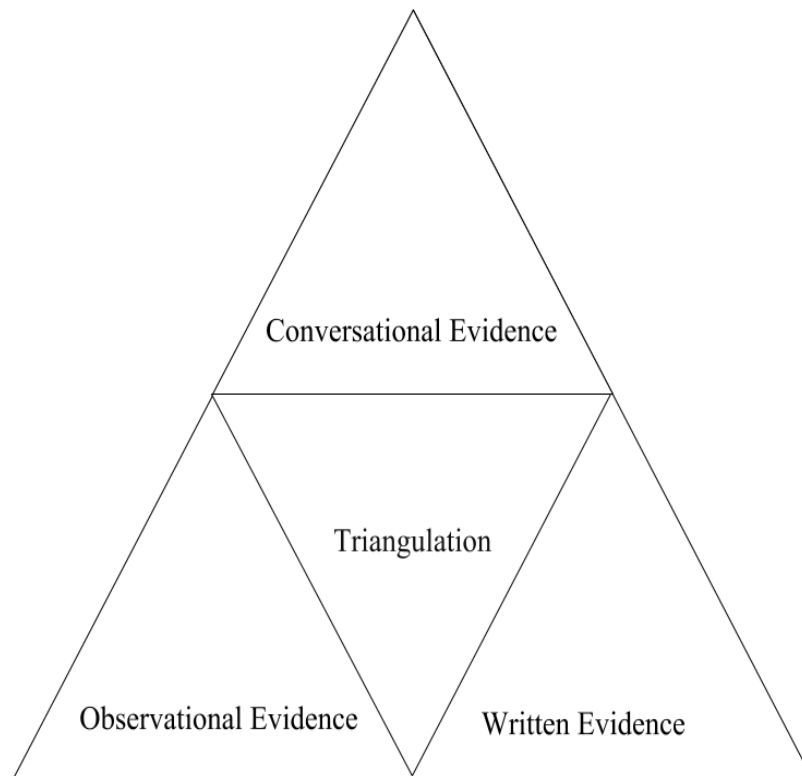
Figure 3.9. The Structure of Triangulation Process

The data collected through interviews, documents, and field notes were triangulated and compared, thereby examining the consistency of findings generated by different data-collection methods and the confluence of different data sources from within the same methods at different points in time (Denzin, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). Even if the triangulated data reported inconsistencies, such should not be viewed as diminishing the evidence, but rather as an opportunity to unearth deeper meaning in the data (Patton, 2015).

The triangulation method assisted the researcher in checking and establishing the credibility of the study by examining and analyzing data from multiple perspectives with the intention of finding consistencies across data sources, as demonstrated in Figure 3.10.

Shamsa: "Professional development is a practice-based professional development where school principals gather and share their best practices" (participant had disappointed and sad facial expression when responding to this segment).
Nora: "We have a monthly PD...the only thing we learn from it is nothing, in that it repeats itself with the same stuff" (participant showed frustration).
Majed: "I cannot consider them as real PDs! They occur once a month and focus on best shared practices, end of...story" (showed calm expression).
Ali: "Professional development sessions are focused on sharing best practices" (showed sarcasm and laughter).
Sultan: "Professional development depends on principals' experiences of best practices" (had disappointed and sad facial expressions).
Jennifer: "PD sessions are based on best practices and success stories" (showed no hesitation).
Maria: "We also gave the opportunity for schools to say, 'We are proud of this and we would like to share with others" (maintained happy expression).
Benner: "We really try to disseminate the expertise of principals by using the PDs" (showed defensive responses and gestures).

Figure 3.10. Triangulation Process as it Pertains to Professional Development

As demonstrated in Figure 3.10., the triangulation process confirmed with multiple sources that the professional development orchestrated in the Al-Ain district was based on sharing practices and success stories. Participants' responses and observational field notes taken from interviews corroborated and aligned with the available documents (professional development agenda, invitation forms, email communications, etc.). Finally, reliance on different data collection methods compensated for the individual limitations of isolated methods and enhanced their corresponding benefits (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Guba, 1981).

Member checks were implemented in this research to ensure that the accurate realities of participants were represented in the final account, guaranteeing that no potential biases or data distortions were created by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this case, the participants were asked to review the transcriptions and reports to ensure their perceptions were accurately represented and to correct any inconsistencies. During this endeavor of member-checking, the researcher compiled a write-up of interpretations of the individual cases and invited the study participants to give honest feedback to validate them. All participants confirmed that the interpretations reflected their views, feelings, and experiences.

Dependability, or reliability, speaks to the stability or consistency with which obtained results could be reproduced over and over, resulting in similar findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After all, the overarching goal, as Yin (2014) stated, is to "minimize errors and biases in a study" (p. 49). Thus, thoroughly checking the integrity of this case study allowed the researcher to remain dependable, because any auditor or prospective investigator would arrive at the same results if similar procedures were followed. The "established dependability" audit contained thorough documentation of the data collection and analysis processes, a similar tactic to that which Yin (2014) suggested for "chain[s] of evidence" and "the development of [a] case study database" (p. 49).

As for transferability, the researcher provided a thorough description of the research context and assumptions to the degree to which the results may apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the study. Although the findings obtained from this study cannot be generalized due to various factors—such as the minimal sample size, purposeful sampling technique, and context-dependent knowledge—they might, however, be

transferrable to other school districts with similar characteristics as those shared in this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Adding to that, Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated the following, "…[a] narrative developed about the context so that judgments about the degree of fit or similarity may be made by others who may wish to apply all or part of the findings elsewhere" (p. 77). With transferability, prospective researchers can build from one another and progress in unity, bringing results and solutions to problems more quickly.

As for confirmability, which is the degree to which the research findings can be neutral, the researcher kept track of the development of the research through an audit trail to ensure the findings were not biased (Patton, 2015). The established audit trail helped provide a rationale for every step and decision in the research process. Also, discussions with educational researchers (peer debriefings) who had conducted similar research provided an opportunity to uncover any bias that may have remained (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Whether consciously or not, researchers brought their own distinctive perspectives to the research process, and thus, the data interpretation can be somewhat susceptible to subjectivity, if not regularly checked (Miles & Huberman, 1994). However, if findings are examined by other informed professionals who appraise the data, then no indicative biases effected the data analysis.

According to Patton (2015), confirmability demands the following: "intellectual rigor, professional integrity, and methodological competence" (p. 570). The need to entrust and consult with other professionals to co-construct meaning and provide beneficial feedback regarding the interpretation of findings is stimulating, a thought-provocative process, and above all, a bias-detecting process that bolsters the

trustworthiness of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher of this study

being aware of his previous position as a public-school teacher, as well as interim acting

vice principal in the same context, expressed personal bias and beliefs related to the

experience with the principal evaluation process in the same setting in which the study

was conducted.

Ethics

Ethical issues are critically challenging in qualitative research, especially when

associated with the interaction between researchers and participants (Bassey, 1999;

Patton, 2015). For this reason, taking precautions by formulating specific ethical

guidelines was a prerequisite in different stages of this study. For example, to circumvent

major pitfalls that might emerge during the course of the data collection process and

findings report (Merriam, 2009), the researcher secured the research sites and participants

by providing pseudonyms to assure anonymity.

Some documents, such as evaluation rubrics, professional standards, and

evaluation frameworks, were public records; and therefore, such information did not

jeopardize any participants. Even so, other professional records and communication

evidences—such as email letters between principals and cluster managers, as well as the

final summative evaluation of their performance—were voluntary, and pseudonyms were

previously assigned.

Overall, the ethical checklist and procedures proposed by Patton (2015) were used

to ensure that ethical considerations and guidelines were properly followed: the research

purpose and used methods were illuminated; the benefits and reciprocity for participants

were explained; any potential risks were introduced clearly; assurance of confidentiality

and informed consent were fulfilled; data access and ownership were clarified; and the research data were examined through strict confines established in the institutional review board (IRB) application.

Statement of Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the process of reflecting and acknowledging how the researcher's identity, experience, knowledge, and relationships influence the research work—more as a self-examination and self-conscious awareness between the researcher and others (Chiseri-Strater, 1996; Pillow, 2003). According to Merriam (2009), reflexivity statements unearth the identity of the researcher and enable readers to ruminate on and understand the interpretation of the data. For the purposes of reflexivity, the following is the summation of the researcher's previous experience in the field of education, particularly related to the evaluation and supervision.

The researcher was a former Emirate teacher of the same region in which this study was conducted (Ali-Ain, Emirate of Abu Dhabi, UAE). In addition, the researcher experienced the teacher evaluation process for four consecutive years, which had some commonalities to current principal evaluations, including formative evaluations, reflective conversations on practices and professional development, portfolios, and summative evaluations that measure performance at the end of the academic year.

More importantly, the researcher had the privilege to work as an interim vice principal for one term managing and evaluating teachers. Being an Emirate, it was necessary to be tasked with administrative responsibilities because most administrative positions were primarily preoccupied by Emirates. As a result, the researcher was partially subjected to the principal evaluation process during this time—although his

position was temporary and unofficial as acting principal. His limited experience with the principal evaluation process involved meeting with different cluster mangers who oversaw, assisted, and evaluated principals. The researcher also checked the components of the evaluation process, such as the portfolio, instruments, and artifacts used; gained perspective on what skills and professional standards should be manifested; learned how principals were evaluated by the end of the year; was involved in many administrative teams in the school; and aided the school principal in filing and documenting his portfolio that demonstrated his school management technique. All of this now proffers him, the researcher, with the ability to see the evaluation process from different perspectives, such as placing himself in the role of principal, generating critical judgment skills, and knowing what data to look for.

Assessment of Benefits and Risks

This research encompasses benefits to both the participants and educators, where they could reflect on their practices and ruminate on their roles throughout the evaluation process. In the pursuit of lessons and real practices, educators may draw on the perspectives and insights highlighted in this research, which could lead them to revise their established principal evaluation process and refine their existing supervisory practices. For instance, principals leading schools of different levels (Cycles I, II, and III) might benefit from this study as the evaluative process and supervision embedded were examined from three different school levels. This research may teach educators what constitutes a suitable evaluation process, effective supervisory practice, and how supervision promotes learning and growth.

Overall, there is a low level of risk associated with this research, involving the unintentional, potential invasion of the thoughts and perceptions of participants during interviews. In fact, principals and cluster managers may have felt uncomfortable disclosing some confidential information regarding their evaluation process, school scores, and other information pertinent to their cluster managers. However, to minimize such risk, principals and cluster managers were told that they were not required to answer any questions with which they were uncomfortable. Additionally, all identifying information was coded to protect the confidentiality of the participants involved. Member checks were conducted with each participant to ensure accuracy and full representation of their accounts.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is the sample size of only six principals and three cluster managers. As a result, data gathered may not be generalizable about the principal evaluation process and supervision in the UAE. Nevertheless, while generalizability may not be possible, some transferability of finding and insights to other districts or Emirates could be extrapolated given the commonality of practices across the Emirates. To ensure accuracy and reduce limitations and biases in the study, data collection and analyses were orchestrated in line with qualitative research guidelines. Throughout the study, trustworthiness was maintained by triangulating data sources, member-checks, a journal of case study notes, and a reflexivity journal to bolster the reliability of the study (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014).

The following chapter, Chapter Four, unfolds the findings of the within-case analysis, where each participant case was explored in-depth as a stand-alone entity. Each

case was treated as comprehensive and provided a wealth of contextual data and individual uniqueness. Chapter Four is divided into three sections: sections one and two include contextual overviews of school districts and the research participants, and section three includes the findings of the within-case analysis.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the principal evaluation processes and supervisory practices that cluster managers (evaluators) and principals follow throughout the academic year. The study was guided through the following research questions:

4. How is the principal evaluation process conducted as described and experienced by public school principals in Al-Ain city?

5. What are the supervisory approaches selected by cluster managers in the principal evaluation process?

6. In what ways do the supervisory approaches employed by cluster managers help principals sustain growth and development?

This study is framed within the interpretive framework of constructivism, which rests on the notion that individuals gain insights by exploring the richness, depth, and complexity of a given phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The conceptual backdrop of the study draws from developmental supervision (Glickman et al., 2017; Zepeda, 2017), differentiated supervision (Glatthorn, 1990), and adult learning theories (Conlan et al., 2003; Knowles, 1984; Langer & Applebee, 1986). In addition, the researcher used qualitative interviews as the primary method of data collection, along with field notes and document analyses.

A purposeful sampling technique coupled with specific predetermined criteria for participant selection was used to ensure balance between the study purpose, research questions, and study context. Nine educators participated in this study—specifically, three male school principals and three female school principals, each leading different school cycles (levels); and three cluster managers (one male and two females) supervising and evaluating school principals in three different cycles (primary, middle, and high school levels).

All participants were interviewed in one lengthy, semi-structured session that spanned for almost two hours to gain insights on the main topics of evaluation and supervision. Further, interviews were conducted with individual principals in their specific buildings, while the interviews for cluster managers took place in central offices (Al-Ain zone). Attention to schedule, location preference, and privacy were important. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researcher slightly modified the interview guides by incorporating newfound information from each interview to generate ideas and information overlooked during the initial interview design.

Data were examined and analyzed by applying the constant comparative methods of qualitative analysis—throughout the entire interview process versus a specific point of time— reviewing transcripts, and assigning codes and memos (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Patton, 2015). Back-and-forth interplay of member-checking among participants occurred after the initial interpretation of data to ensure accurate recording of their accounts in the final report. The data collection and analysis processes occurred in the Fall Semester of 2017 and continued until Spring Semester of 2019.

This chapter includes three sections. Sections one and two include contextual overviews of school districts and the research participants. Section three includes a case-by-case account of each participant's interview and findings. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of its contents and an introduction to the next chapter where a cross-case analysis examining similarities and differences across cases in the form of emerging themes, is presented.

Context of the Research Site

The Al-Ain school district is situated on the eastern side of the Abu Dhabi Emirate with 408,733 residents according to the world population review. Al-Ain is considered the second largest school district in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, operating 103 schools and serving 55,883 students, as of 2017, as displayed in table 4.1. Twelve cluster managers of different nationalities were employed to provide the necessary supervision, guidance, counsel, and evaluation to school leaders in the 103-school region.

Table 4.1

System Description of Three Districts Supervised by ADEC

Zone (District)	Number of schools	Number of students	Number of Principals	Number of Cluster Managers
Abu Dhabi	116	66,513	117	48
Al-Ain	103	55,883	103	12
Al-Gharbia	31	9,780	26	0
Total	250	132,176	246	60

The Al-Ain research site selection is suitable and aligned with the purpose and objective of this study because the current evaluation processes including supervision warrants further investigation. To date, no study has examined the supervision and

evaluation of principals since the inception of the Abu Dhabi Education Council in 2005 in Abu Dhabi. However, Emirate principals and cluster managers are key leaders in the success and effectiveness of their schools. The perceptions about leader evaluation and supervision will aid in examining the current implementation of the principal evaluation process and supervision. The results of such a study might help in the refinement and design of evaluation systems that improve principal practices, support their professional growth, and offer insights on differentiating practices to meet individual needs.

Context of the Research Participants

Study participants were recruited using purposeful sampling with a set of predetermined criteria—in which specific stipulations needed to be met for a participant to be selected (Patton, 2015). More specifically, the school principals had to meet the following criteria to participate in the study: (1) must be exposed to the same evaluation and supervision established by ADEC in public schools; (2) must have experienced the same evaluation and supervision for at least three years; (3) must have a cluster manager supervision and evaluation on a regular basis; and (4) must be willing to openly share and reflect on personal practices and experiences associated with principal evaluation and supervision.

Purposeful sampling was also used to recruit cluster managers with the exception of one manager referred by a school principal. The research initially called for two cluster manager participants; however, to ensure full coverage of the three cycles and provide information that otherwise would not be possible if only two cycles were taken, a third participant was selected. In this case, each selected cluster manager supervised a group of principals of the same cycle. The following criteria was established to select cluster

managers: (1) currently undertaking the role of a principal supervisor and evaluator in the same region; (2) experiencing the same evaluation and supervision for more than two years; and (3) willingness to provide reflective conversations related to their personal experiences with the evaluative and supervisory processes.

Table 4.2 outlines the gender, school level, years of experience, final evaluation score, and school evaluation score of principals and Table 4.3 displays the characteristics of the cluster mangers.

Table 4.2

Overview of School Principals (All Names are Pseudonyms)

Participants	Gender	Years of Experience as a Principal	School Level	Evaluation Score	School Evaluation Score
Salama	Female	18	Cycle I	Accomplished	B
Nora	Female	23	Cycle II	Exemplary	A
Shamsa	Female	17	Cycle III	Exemplary	A
Majed	Male	18	Cycle I	Accomplished	A
Ali	Male	26	Cycle II	Accomplished	B
Sultan	Male	14	Cycle III	Accomplished	D

Gender and cycle (meaning school level in the United Arab Emirates) were equally important in principal selection. To expand and strengthen the study's findings, each selected gender group led one full cycle, either elementary, middle, or high school. Furthermore, a 12-year span of principal administrative experience existed between the least experienced at 14 years to the most veteran principal having led for 26 years. Owing to the repeated refusal by several new principals to participate in this study (though they met the criteria selection), the researcher kept the research focused on those with at least

three years of experiences with the current principal evaluation and supervision as defined in the selection criteria.

As illustrated in Table 4.2, all male school principals were ranked "Accomplished" in their final evaluation of the academic year 2017. In contrast, two female principals ranked "Exemplary" and one female ranked "Accomplished." The formally identified categories used for rating school administrators progressed from "pre-foundation" to "foundation," "emerging," "established," "accomplished," and "exemplary" (ADEC, 2011).

Table 4.3

Overview of Cluster Managers (All Names are Pseudonyms)

Participants	Gender	Nationality	Years of Experience as a Cluster Manager	School Level Assigned	Number of Principals Assigned
Jennifer	Female	American	3	Cycle I	9
Maria	Female	American	4	Cycle II	8
Benner	Male	Canadian	6	Cycle III	15

Unlike school principals, the cluster manager selection was more cycle-oriented (elementary, middle, and high school levels) and female-dominant. As displayed in Table 4.3., their experiences in the evaluative and supervisory roles ranged between three and six years. Each cluster manager led one cycle and had a different number of assigned principals to supervise and evaluate.

Findings of Within-Case Analysis

The purpose of this study was to investigate the principal evaluation process and supervisory practices that cluster managers (evaluators) and principals follow throughout

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the academic year. Five major areas related to evaluation and supervision were examined

to evaluate these processes and practices: evaluation components; cluster managers;

formative evaluation; summative evaluation; incentives and consequences. Several

elements emerged within each area during data analysis. Representation of the findings

for this chapter was done in a case-by-case analysis format with each individual case as a

stand-alone entity.

Case One: Salama, Elementary School Principal (Cycle I)

Evaluation Components

Intentional efforts necessary to achieve evaluation purpose. Salama applauded the

principal evaluation as an evaluative tool capable of identifying "areas of strength and

weakness and an avenue for learning." She perceived the evaluation process as a

powerful microscope, continuously capturing the principal's abilities to handle varied

pieces of daily school life and providing learning opportunities to better deal with such

potentially challenging aspects. Salama elaborated:

> The purpose of evaluation is to identify the strengths and weakness of the school
>
> principal, to make sure she [the principal] is able to design a strategic plan for the
>
> school, able to improve teacher effectiveness, and increase student achievement.
>
> On top of that, the evaluation process can provide a learning opportunity for me
>
> and my team to help us better deal with many issues in the school: instructional
>
> practices, parent complaints, student disciplines, communications, use of
>
> technology and other things.

However, optimal results from the process were only achievable when the cluster

manager and principal work intentionally to learn from the opportunity. Salama

expressed that the "current no-consequence environment" for "repeat low performance" lends to her belief not every principal was driven to learn from the evaluative and supervisory setting. Principals, therefore, came to school each day "assured and confident" that "their failing performance score will not affect their position."

At the same time, when cluster managers were overly confident in their position, they could exacerbate the problem of low performance through their "passivity," "laziness," and "unresponsiveness" to the process thus preventing themselves from achieving the end-goals of the principal evaluation. She emphasized that the "willingness" of both principal and cluster manager to eagerly participate in the evaluation process to ensure improvement without pressure to benefit from the process was the single most important thing for success. Salama said:

> The evaluation is not followed by any severe consequences which make you relieved from the stress and not worry about whatever the score they give you. I wonder how the principals and cluster managers would achieve the purpose of evaluation in such environment.

The participant projected a clear opinion that the decisive test, given the absence of accountability and punishing measures, is whether the cluster manager and principal can achieve the purpose of evaluation.

Criteria aligned with professional standards. Salama believed that the evaluation criteria aligned with the professional standards that dictated and defined the principal's daily work. "Our standards are reachable, and we received a lot of trainings on them, although a long time ago," she stated. More specifically, the professional standards for principals were central to the evaluation system in which principal performance is

evaluated through "5 standards" under which "18 elements" fall. Salama noted that the cluster manager was "the benchmark for principals," who were "supposedly hired" to provide assistance in understanding and interrupting these standards and their elements, in addition to other supervisory and evaluative responsibilities.

Unorganized universal criteria. Drawing on the criteria on which principals were evaluated, Salama felt that the criteria set by ADEC were, in most cases, "clear," "more focused," and "defensible." Her primary concerns were the performance rubric's order and the feasibility of the criteria to be implemented across the school district. She voiced her concern that "it is an unfair thing to evaluate all principals using one same tool without considering different variables each principal has in her school building," and therefore, casted doubts on whether it could sufficiently work for all principals.

To her, ADEC implemented a one-size-fits-all rubric as an evaluative tool for principals, without understanding the impact of various factors (school cycles, geographical location of schools, student population, number of teachers, taught curricula, and the availability of resources and materials) on the principal evaluation. In practice, Salama believed the criteria did no disservice to her evaluation as much as it could do to schools with limited staff and resources. She wondered if cluster managers were made aware of this matter could they be flexible when evaluating schools with cases that veered from normal.

While utilization of performance rubrics was vital for consistency, Salama felt the behavioral summary scale used by ADEC to determine the acceptable performance levels for each of the criteria were, in some cases, disorganized and need careful rearranging. She noted that as the performance scale progresses from the left (pre-foundation) to the

right (exemplary), it became harder to achieve, and one could not move into a particular level without achieving all the preceding levels. See the performance rating scale as illustrated in Figure 4.1. This figure shows a sample of the evaluation rubric demonstrating a six-level rating scale that guides the cluster manager in assessing to what extent principals are meeting the standard of "leading strategically."

Figure 4.1. Principal Evaluation Rubric

For example, a principal cannot achieve "established" for criteria of "leading change" without having met all the indicators in pre-foundation, foundation, and emerging even if he, or she, can demonstrate the indicators for "established." Speaking of this matter, Salama explained:

If you reached an emerging on one criteria, then that is it. You are at that level and cannot go beyond. What baffles me is sometimes I feel I achieved both emerging and accomplished on a particular standard, but not established which is

in between the two scales. They [the cluster managers] tell you that you cannot

skip one scale you did not achieve!! So, I am in emerging level in that criteria.

Salama's perspectives demonstrate the confusing experiences she had with her evaluation

criteria arrangement. She found herself achieving two separated performance scales in

one criteria, and because Salama had not achieved the specific performance criteria

established between them, her score was determined as emerging rather than proficient. It

is critical that the level sequence match what occurs in the behavioral text and go along

smoothly in the continuum.

Portfolio rarely used. Complying with ADEC policies and guidelines, school

principals were required to document, into a professional portfolio, acceptable evidence

in the form of artifacts and work samples that reflected the professional standards for

evaluation. Salama noted the distinctive feature of collaboration between administrative

teams and department heads to build the portfolio although "the school principal had sole

responsibility" when questioned and evaluated. She described the portfolio collection

process as a "partial monitoring system" that could be of single importance in the final

evaluation "if conflict arises between the principal and cluster manager" during the

summative evaluation process.

Salama also expressed that "the portfolio was not thoroughly examined page by

page as it used to be six years ago. Now, we use it only if we are asked to present

evidence or if there's disagreement in the final evaluation meeting." One reason, she

noted, for not meticulously examining the portfolio, was that cluster managers had

become more experienced at what data to looking for and examining specific data, and

not to mention "their regular weekly visits" added to their accumulative understanding of the principal's performance.

The Cluster Managers

Unclear roles and responsibilities. Drawing on her frequent interactions with several cluster managers over eight years, Salama came to the discovery that each cluster manager has different "personality," "motivation," and "expertise," but each of them rarely engaged in school meetings, joined classroom observation, or voluntarily communicated with teachers, unless "I asked them to," she asserted. Most of the time her cluster managers came to the school, they "isolated themselves in the principal's office" where they engaged in "informal discussions" on various topics including administrative work.

Prior to the official entry of cluster managers into ADEC schools, Salama associated the roles of cluster managers with supervision and evaluation, as both address "the principal performance gaps in regular basis" and "broaden the knowledge base and instructional skills." She later discovered that their roles were limited to "checking schools" were following ADEC regulations, discussing an array of "administrative issues related to school" and "evaluating principal performance." Despite weekly visits and their presence in school buildings, an evident lack of supervisory skills in her cluster manager presented as no increased skill development or increased school effectiveness for Salama.

Formative Evaluation

Summatively-driven. Salama stated: "I view the evaluation process as more summative than formative, despite the fact there is plenty room for the formative piece." In addition, she insisted much more attention must be paid to establishing an effective

formative process as a necessary precursor to summative assessment, and crucial component of, a sound evaluation. "Supervisors should capitalize on the formative process and focus on improving the leadership capacity of their principals as much as possible before arriving to the final evaluation to make this evaluation successful," she added.

Supervision lacks focus. Failure to leverage the formative evaluation for learning opportunities was due to the exclusive "focus of cluster managers on administrative matters" over instructional leadership. Salama highlighted that rather than limiting their focus to administrative matters and solving management problems, cluster managers "should devote sacred time to supervision." Such a move would sharpen principals' leadership capacity; key to success and school performance improvement. Supervision, she believed, "goes beyond tackling the administration and school function areas" and must include "continually reflective conversations" on her "instructional leadership practices."

Throughout her years as a principal, Salama noted that most of her former cluster managers, including the current one, used the "collaborative approach" where both the manager and herself exchanged ideas and expertise in conversations. Regardless of reciprocal exchange, she viewed the conversations embedded in these sessions as "superficial" and never left the boundaries of procedural and administrative matters. Salama pointed out that supervision through conversation that did not address the issues relevant to "instructional practices" and "growth" was irrelevant. Cluster managers who made an earnest supervisory effort to purposely ensure the moment was focused,

productive, and reflective would bolster the instructional leadership skills of the principal. Salama explicated:

Good supervision is not about any random conversation as much as it is about focused and reflective conversations. When I address some behavioral issues of students or any sort of problem, she [cluster manager] would always tell me to visit a neighboring school that had no problems with such so I can learn from their practice!! My first response would be that we have different characteristics in term of gender and cycle and so on. She would tell me to think about it, and then we never open this topic again. She is probably trying to help but this is not enough.

She added that if the cluster manager was "unprepared" for the conversation the whole purpose and meaning was lost between shifting topics and giving improvised, yet impractical solutions to the problem being discussed. In most cases, Salama initiated the conversations with her cluster managers, "not so much for a specific purpose, but for remaining professional in the workplace." Such initiated conversations were about asking her to review the school improvement plan, to give advice on urgent issues related to parent complaints, or to help with teacher shortage.

However, Salama received immediate help from her cluster managers when it came to solving administrative issues. She narrated examples that illustrated the ability of her current cluster manager to be approachable and responsive, specifically in handling serious teacher shortages and parent complaints. "She [the cluster manager] would immediately sit down with me and discuss the problem…. She would make phone calls

to follow up on that problem…Sometimes, she would make time to visit even if it was not our scheduled day."

Ineffective feedback. In addition to unprepared conversations, Salama referred to all feedback she received from her cluster manager throughout the entire evaluation process as nothing more than "simplistic comments," deprived of depth and quality, and laden with positive remarks. More specifically, she frequently heard "that is very good," "that is fine," and "Okay." Sometimes her cluster manager remained in a "silent mode," only taking notes and listening without providing any verbal feedback. Salama espoused the belief the cluster mangers "should know better" and be able to "provide the support" the principal needs by giving "constructive feedback," offering "effective guidance," and providing "quality supervision" to excel in their challenging position.

Her disappointment in the attitudes of her cluster managers regarding supervision, and more specifically, in providing constructive feedback was evident. She was confused at the lack of guidance and appropriate treatment she sought from her cluster managers. Furthermore, failure to provide accurate feedback accompanied by substantive and unrelated suggestions for improvement closes the door to principal enhancement. "Sometimes, I told myself not to talk about my practice because I know I will receive nothing" she expressed. It was not enough for cluster managers to be only the problem-solving managers, but more importantly, reliable resources that principals could count on for effective instructional leadership practices. In other words, the key to gaining principals' trust is through being "reliable leaders" in the process and demonstrating a level of mastery in supervision.

Superficial professional development. Little appreciation was seen for the so-called established professional development (PD) to improve school principals. Salama noted that not "customizing the professional development to accommodate principal needs would strip the learning opportunity from the whole process." Moreover, the PDs were comprehensive for all "principals of different needs." She described her PDs as "superficial" and barely adding to her "learning experience." The PD was a "one-monthly-gathering moment" with principals of the same cycle that are divided into "five groups and share their best practices."

Note that being a principal at a specific cycle did not equate to having the same time in-service experience or demographic experience, both aspects that required individual attention in the design of PD. However, Salama commented that some appreciated these types of PD since it was "perhaps beneficial to their experience level and school situation," an attribute she never felt about. It was apparent that newer lesser-experienced principals benefit from the current PD while more seasoned principals are looking for a more rigorous and guided PD experience to meet their specific situational needs.

Professional goals ignored. An additional hurdle experienced by principals was the cluster manager's negligence of cluster managers to monitor the professional goals of principals. In her interview, Salama stated that principals were obliged to "set three-to-five professional goals at the beginning of year." These goals, while not necessarily linked to the previous evaluation performance, were seen as ways to improve instructional leadership and to respond to sudden changes. Salama selected goals specific to "curriculum and teaching skills of the 21st century." While she developed steps to

fulfill her goal's mission, she received no oversight from her cluster manager. Her goals were "not reviewed, revisited, or monitored" by her cluster manager during the evaluation process. As a result, she relied on herself to measure the effectiveness of achieving her specific curriculum-based goals.

Salama's account indicates that cluster managers knew the mandate for principals to submit their professional goals to "E-performance" in the ADEC platform, but do not seem to incorporate those goals into a well-planned professional development that best fits the principal's specific leadership development needs.

Summative Evaluation

Rituals of summative evaluation. The final evaluation meeting between the principal and cluster manager was summative. Here the principal's performance was reviewed and evaluated for a final written report which was filed with ADEC. During this meeting the principal was scored on a six-point scale as "pre-foundation," "foundation," "emerging," "established," "accomplished," or "exemplary" in each of the 18 criteria and given an overall summative score. "The principal and the cluster manager would schedule a meeting to discuss and review the principal's work throughout the academic year," Salama stated. The principal was provided three weeks notice for a meeting that usually occurred in the month of May.

Unreliable secondary cluster manager. An integral component of the summative evaluation was the involvement of another cluster manager who served as a "secondary eyewitness," ensuring the correct steps and measures were performed in accordance with ADEC requirements. The secondary cluster manager also served as a "non-biased professional" ensuring the principal receives "fair treatment and an evaluation free of

biases." Nonetheless, Salama expressed strong disapproval of the secondary cluster manager's input. Although she felt "pretty satisfied" with her final evaluation scores, she doubted that the secondary cluster manager could provide "valid" and "reliable" input on her performance witnessed in a single visit lasting no more than two hours.

Her rationale was grounded in the premise that the secondary cluster manager had never been "visible" in her school the entire year, had never "shadowed" her work, and had never "communicated" with her prior to the final evaluation. Thus, the third party "could not provide a concrete judgment" about her performance with reliance solely on the information provided by the primary cluster manager and the short visit with the principal during the final evaluation meeting. Salama' perspective states an unavailable cluster manager in the evaluation process loses the privilege to have input on her performance at the summative evaluation. The said final professional judgment should be voiced and communicated through the primary cluster manager who provided what the secondary cluster manager did not provide—continued visibility in school. "This is not to denigrate or trivialize the position of the secondary evaluator, but to spotlight a potential pitfall," she said.

Mandatory Self-evaluation. Prior to the final evaluation, the principal was required to complete a self-evaluation. The primary cluster manager "would ask the principals to evaluate themselves" using either an electronic form" or "hard copy"— whichever the principal is most comfortable to complete and return. At the same time, the cluster manager would also complete "a similar form" with intent to provide pre-evaluation for the targeted principal. These documents were then reviewed as part of the final evaluation meeting. Salama indicated that the main purpose of self-evaluation was

to "compare and contrast" across the two assessments, more of a baseline to see how she

viewed her own "evaluation" as opposed to the cluster manager's view of her.

Salama described the self-evaluation as the conversation engine that not only

helped guide the summative evaluation meeting, but also fueled the discussion to keep

continue and reach resolve, especially when the cluster manager and the principal

"disagree on what should be scored in a particular criterion." In other words, the wider

the gap between the cluster manager's pre-evaluation and principal's self-evaluation, the

longer the conversation takes to arrive at settlement. One way to close an evaluation gap

and reach an agreement is by presenting "acceptable evidence." Salama had the

opportunity to provide evidence from the portfolio and defend her claim.

In fact, through several encounters with the summative evaluation meetings, she

found the self-evaluation experience and the ensuing discussion in the summative

evaluation rather helpful. She recalled:

> I remember scoring myself in some areas as established, but my cluster manager
> convinced me that I was accomplished in those areas!! She [the primary cluster
> manager] pointed out to the evidence that I have which corroborated her
> judgment…. I was thinking for a while … perhaps I was a little hard on myself
> when I was evaluating myself.

This passage represents how the cluster manager is helpful in identifying things that

Salama may not have otherwise realized in her self-evaluation. Overall, Salama cherished

the treatment she received from cluster managers and articulated a satisfactory attitude

toward her final score: "there were no surprises at this moment. I saw it coming and was

pleased with the score I got."

Non-negotiable final decision. As part of the final evaluation meeting, the principal was asked to leave the room and the two cluster managers engage in a ten-minute private discussion to finalize their thinking, draw conclusions, and share the definitive score. Whatever the cluster managers bring to the table after that is "conclusive and non-negotiable." Salama stated, "The principal has to accept the final decision and sign off at the bottom of the final evaluation page." The signature does not necessarily indicate acceptance of the decision, but instead, acknowledges that correct procedures were properly followed in the summative evaluation. Salama stated, "It was not explicitly specified what procedures and actions one might take if a principal disagrees on the final decision" and chooses to challenge the decision.

Feedback absent. Another finding that Salama reflected on was the final report and feedback given to her after her evaluation ended. She received only one-time feedback, although she considered it as an "automatic feedback," presented on the final evaluation rubric sheet. "It only tells you where you stand against the 18 elements in a form of broad behavioral summary statements, but with no proper guidance as to how to improve, challenge, or achieve the next level," she recounted. In addition, the summative evaluation was the concluding chapter of her annual principal evaluation, technically ceasing opportunities to learn from previous mistakes or to set professional goals based around the information available for the next year.

By closing the principal's year out with a final evaluation that lacks steps for improvement, the principal must be internally driven to develop goals and strategies to ensure growth and movement through the evaluation rubric the following year. Salama

commented on the disconnected link between the summative evaluation results and the

next year's progress when she said:

> When the summative evaluation wraps up the year, we start over the next year as
>
> if the past is cut off!! We start over the next year… I cannot talk about other
>
> principals. It could be different from what I experienced.

Salama's response demonstrated the importance of the cluster manager assisting

principals in conceptualizing their own performance with greater clarity and using current

summative outcomes to improve performance the following year.

Incentives and Consequences

 Incentives absent. Salama lamented the absence of a reasonable "accountability

system" while reaffirming on many occasions her belief in the importance of having

"incentives" or "reward system" to honor those working diligently to improve their

performance throughout the year. She also expressed frustration about the way ADEC

treated "distinguished school principals," in that no type of incentive was attached to

either the principal's or the school's performance. In this respect, she indicated that

ADEC defaulted to treating all school principals as essentially the same, with no

differentiation between "excellent and poor performance." Salama felt that her hard effort

was "worthless" and went "unnoticed." Salama expressed a desire for the central office to

send her something as simple as "a thank you letter" when she receives a high score.

Such a gesture would show support and encouragement, sustain motivation, and foster

self-worth.

 Punitive measures absent. Another deficit Salama singled out was not binding the

summative evaluation to sanctions aimed at putting pressure on principals to improve,

especially for those who repeatedly showed no growth or improvement over consecutive years. She stated, "Principals are unlikely to take the evaluation system as seriously as they should because they know they cannot be dismissed." There was no "suspension, improvement plan, termination, early retirement, transferring activities, warnings, or any kind of punitive measures taken for those with low-performance." This atmosphere undermines and negates the reason for the process.

In summary, the major findings derived from the interview with Salama are as follows:

- The absence of a reasonable accountability system might deter principals and cluster managers from achieving the purpose of the principal evaluation and only those with willingness and strong desire can improve;

- The evaluation criteria are focused, clear, defensible, and comprehensive for all school leaders;

- The apparent roles of cluster managers are limited to giving updates, checking on school operations, and solving administrative issues;

- The evaluation is more summative-driven than formative since the latter is neglected with poor implementation by cluster managers;

- The dominant supervisory approach selected by cluster manager is collaborative approach;

- The total supervision and feedback given to the principals is shallow and unfocused, not adding to instructional leadership improvement and school effectiveness in spite of the frequent visits;

- The provided professional development are not tailored to the individual principal's needs nor linked to either past evaluation results or professional goals;

- The secondary cluster manager involved in the final evaluation meeting has a voice in the summative evaluation despite complete absence throughout the year;

- The final score and report given to school principals concerning their performance are non-negotiable and lack feedback to guide principal improvement the following year; and

- No incentives or consequences are attached to the principal evaluation process.

The following case focuses on Nora, a middle school principal. Nora has worked as a school principal for 23 years and experienced the evaluation system for 8 years.

Case Two: Nora, Middle School Principal (Cycle II)

Evaluation Components

Evaluation purpose requires clear roles. When asked about the purpose of principal evaluations, Nora stated without hesitation that it was to identify "areas of strength and weakness" that assist cluster managers with "design and implementation of appropriate supervision interventions" crucial to "principal growth and development." Without hesitation, she added that the implementation of principal evaluation set forth by cluster managers failed in achieving its basic intent. This failure was perhaps due to "the unclear supervisory roles outlined for unprepared cluster managers" in carrying out principal evaluations. Drawing from her experience working with seven cluster managers over the course of eight years, Nora stated the following:

I am not sure if the purpose of evaluation can be achieved [when] each cluster

[manager] has different roles. Hmm…different expectations and different

commitment. Honestly, I am not sure if they were provided with written

guidelines and professional development to succeed in their supervisory and

evaluative responsibilities. I am just telling what I am seeing!

Nora believed evaluation "must be a priority for ADEC with written documents and

guidelines" that directed cluster managers' efforts toward successful and effective

execution of evaluation goals. Thus, the blame could not be entirely placed on cluster

managers as ADEC was partially responsible for such failure.

Mixed interpretations of criteria. Although evaluation criteria were mirrored by

the professional standards of principals, they lacked clear guidelines. Unclear interpretive

guidelines and examples for each criterion resulted in "mixed interpretations" by cluster

managers that led to "random practices" which ultimately impacted the evaluation

performance of principals. Nora experienced that each cluster manager had a completely

different interpretation and examples of the same criterion by which they evaluated her.

She wished for the rubric to be similar to those used in teacher evaluation, where

supporting documents delineates each criterion would be more effective and fair. Nora

stated, "Teacher evaluation describes everything for teachers about each specific criterion

from A to Z—from how to achieve various performance levels and what evidence was

needed to support such with additional examples and descriptive actions."

During discussion, Nora recalled a workshop specifically designed to assist teams

of principals to learn the nature of evaluation criteria and the evidence collection process.

She said, "It was just a show, nothing more. Pictures from different angles were taken as

solid proof [that] cluster [managers] did their jobs and taught us how to collect evidence. But no one knew what really happened in those pictures." Nora continued:

> During the session, we were asked to provide ways to collect the appropriate evidence for each criterion with several short scenarios. Every team was responsible for one standard and its elements. Once we were done, the show was over. We did not know if what we wrote was right or wrong, valid or invalid. Feedback was not delivered that day.

Presumably designed to end misunderstanding and confusion among principals, the workshop failed its intended purpose and left Nora pessimistic, emotionally impacted, and facing the inevitable acceptance of a failing system for principal evaluation. She expressed, "This is just the beginning of something worse…and…day after day, it is getting worse and worse because one single critical defect affects the work of other bounded structures and practices in the evaluation process."

Impractical criteria. In addition to that, the disconnection between ADEC's expectations of principals and the necessary support to meet those expectations created fundamental problems with the evaluation rubric. School principals were hindered in their efforts of exemplary performance when resources and support for achievement were withheld. For instance, one specific evaluation criterion states that principals are to present "research findings at national and international conferences regarding specific educational topics that have been proven in this school and replicated at other schools."

However, Nora's efforts to persuade the district to participate abroad were futile and ironic because "ADEC puts higher expectations that require traveling while at the same time not giving us the permission to do so. They are contradicting themselves," she

said. She added, "They stopped me more than once from attending and participating in international conferences that focused on school leadership, even though their rubric specifically requested it." Knowing that funding and temporary personnel coverage were vital to gaining approval; Nora ensured the critical issues were covered before seeking ADEC approval for international conference attendance. Nora reflected:

> If my four-day absence is painful to them, it is far more painful to me. They deprived me of a learning opportunity, even when I got the funding from an external organization and had the support from the assistant principals to take over my responsibilities and run the school just as smoothly and perfectly as I would have. I was rejected several times.

Based on her experiences, Nora suggested that the evaluation rubric should be more transparent and consistent, and be free of "significant paradoxes"—to help principals remove barriers and improve in order to achieve the highest level of performance as outlined in the evaluation rubric.

Portfolio rarely used. Although some principals viewed the portfolio as a "mandatory life sentence," they initially gained popularity. However, within a few years it became less important and rarely requested at the final evaluation. The perpetual responsibility of gathering extensive evidence is still required by school principals but seldom do cluster managers ask for evidence or sample work from the portfolio and are satisfied with a "yes" or "no" to their repeated question: "do you have evidence on this matter?"

When examined as a whole, the combination of documentation and interpretation should assist the reviewers in getting a sense of the big picture of a principal's skills,

professionalism, and character. However, Nora found that none of her cluster managers made effort to check the entire portfolio, thus, negating her passionate dedication to building a comprehensive portfolio. Consequently, she began to do the minimum; gathering only basic and simple work. Nevertheless, she said, "The portfolio presented authentic examples of my work and showed my interpretation of that work."

In reflecting upon the portfolio process, Nora commented, "This might be for the best." She elaborated, "If cluster managers keep asking about showing evidence, we will be in trouble not giving them what they are looking for because a valid evidence differs from [one] cluster [manager] to another." However, no clear definition of valid evidence exists among cluster managers, which leads to confusion and chaos in the summative evaluation. Consequently, Nora's attendance at a workshop on evaluation criteria and evidence collection was useless. She proclaimed, "We walked away from that workshop feeling sick to our stomachs," evidence of the continual impact a single defect has in evaluative practices. Ultimately, unclear guidelines of evaluation criteria impact the evidence collection practices for portfolios.

The Cluster Managers

Unclear roles and responsibilities. Nora defined cluster managers as individuals hired to supervise principals, provide them with needed support, and ensure high quality leadership practices in schools. In most cases, Nora's definition did not apply to her former cluster managers, and she noted the following:

> The working length of time spent between a cluster manger and principal was
> indefinite; some stayed longer than others. Most cluster managers made
> unannounced visits to school without planning or careful preparation. [Actually,]

most clusters came into their positions with little or no training in supervisory

work; most focused on school management and operational duties rather than

instructional leadership.

Nora candidly shared that cluster managers were former principals lacking adequate

experience or training for the position. She pointed out that ADEC did not provide

"appropriate professional training for cluster managers" to understand how their expertise

and guidance should impact principal growth. ADEC failed to help them meet the

immense challenge of mentoring principal leadership. Without clear roles or guidelines,

the cluster manager job description was a vague collection of general tasks like

"supervise," "evaluate," "support," "manage," and "coach," which unfortunately further

complicated the already complex and challenging evaluation process.

In discussing her learning experience with seven cluster managers, Nora noted

that her learning growth began with her latest cluster manager. She reported that her

seventh cluster manager seemed very "seasoned, focused, and more capable than others."

Consciously, she found it easy to recognize the "good" and "bad" cluster managers when

observing how they talked, engaged in problem-solving, provided support, and gave

feedback. In other words, their actions in different situations "exposed their real

identities" and "showed their levels of competency."

Formative Evaluation

Poor supervision. Nora described most of her supervision sessions with cluster

managers as insufficient and unsupportive, likely caused by the limited resources

committed to supervision. Many cluster managers relied on conversations about principal

performance even if the conversations were made up of lies or false information. She noted that her conversations with most of her cluster managers failed to solve problems:

> Most cluster managers would listen to my problem but then say nothing afterward. Their next action was not digging much deeper or asking questions to understand the situation or what I was struggling with, but surprisingly changed the subject to talk about something unrelated.

Rather than narrowing the supervisory opportunity to dead-end conversations, Nora suggested cluster managers exercise "on-site observations to identify potentially weak leadership practices." For example, this could be done by observing and evaluating her skills in the classroom. Remarkably, the most impactful investment toward teacher effectiveness and student achievement lies in helping leaders learn the craft of instructional leadership. Nora observed that most cluster managers chose not to observe instructional leadership skills and routine duties within the classrooms or the school boundaries.

Hostile learning environment. More importantly, creating a threat-free environment for school principals is a fundamental function of formative evaluation where "mistakes are part of the learning process and relatively unimportant." Nevertheless, this was not the case with Nora whose trust and outlook on the formative evaluation process was broken by one unforgettable moment when she revealed her weaknesses and school's issues to one of her former cluster managers four years ago. The cluster manager then used this information against her as a weakness on the summative evaluation. Nora narrated the situation:

When I asked my cluster manager for consultation on a teacher who had a long history of absenteeism and who never cared or listened to what I said, the cluster manager gladly wanted to solve the problem … she asked to arrange a meeting with the teacher to deal with her. I was happy back then knowing that I had support and that I was not alone in this. [However,] the cluster manager brought up this absentee teacher as a major weakness in the final evaluation! She said I relied on her to the solve problems and could not do it on my own. Wow! I was speechless at that moment! I could not think of words to say. I thought it was safe to open and ask for help, but not at all. I was wrong! She was hunting for mistakes.

From that moment, Nora began to conceal her weaknesses and school problems from anyone claiming to be a cluster manager and whenever confronted or asked how the school and she were, she simply replied, "Everything is under control" or "everything is proceeding as exactly as planned." Her new adapted responses and behaviors resulted from the bad experience with this "gotcha" cluster manager, as a "defense mechanism" to cope with, and survive, the principal evaluation.

Exceptional supervision. With a compassionate commitment to Nora's success, her newly assigned cluster manager has engaged Nora in an active learning path outweighing the lingering experiences that struck her previous efforts for growth. On their first meeting, she inspired Nora by stating: "We are here partners…it is my responsibility to teach and supervise you…Don't be afraid to make mistakes. I want you to take risks. I want you to thrive and succeed." This encounter inspired Nora to trust her cluster manager and feel more comfortable working with her. For the first time she

experienced the creation of non-threatening environments that were free from fears and full of openness and honesty. This "lifesaver" cluster manager helped Nora regain her trust in herself and others. This seventh cluster manager was the first to assure Nora about the nature of formative evaluations and focus on supervisory goals.

Nora was impressed by her cluster manager's ability to shift among different modes: from a professional diagnosis specialist to a problem-solving manager, supervisor, facilitator, counselor, adviser, payer of compliments, and professional. She elaborated on how her current cluster manager approached classroom observation as an opportunity for principal professional learning, after which she facilitated a transparent discussion in a supportive and non-threatening learning environment. Nora shared:

> She invited us [(the administrative team)] to practice observation. We would sit separately in the classroom and observe a teacher. Once the observation was done, she would ask us what went right [and] what went wrong in classroom. We would share our data and exchange thoughts in a safe learning environment. Next, she would tell us what we missed. For instance, I still remember her words when she said to us, 'keep your eyes focused not only on the teacher but also on the students.' Back then in the classroom we were too focused on the teacher that we overlooked some important aspects.

Nora's satisfaction was reflected in her statement. The learning environment established by her current cluster manager enabled the school administrators to feel comfortable with sharing and learning from their mistakes, helping them see it as challenging enrichment in the learning process, rather than seeing it as a problem to be recorded for the final evaluation. In addition to engaging with school administrators in a productive way, this

cluster manager maintained high sense of visibility and connectedness to all stakeholders—including "teachers," "heads of faculty," "parents," and "students." Nora hoped her current cluster stayed indefinitely but if she was unexpectedly assigned a new one, that the new one had similar traits to this one.

Collaborative versus directive approach. As for supervisory approaches, Nora said only the latest cluster manager employed "a collaborative approach." Meanwhile, the former cluster managers' approaches were more directive in giving orders, making decisions, and catching mistakes. However, an overly directive approach mixed with "gotcha" techniques and power games is likely to have a devastating impact on the evaluation process. Nora believed that cluster managers' approaches could be "tied to their natures and personalities." In addition, the fact that "most are former principals also has a great impact on their practices." Thus, it is necessary for them "to have training or professional development that informs them about the foundations of supervision," she stated.

Ineffective feedback. Prior to the seventh cluster manager, Nora's experience with feedback was limited to simple comments and remarks; however, they were void of useful information for growth. While positive comments such as "good work," "keep going," or "well done" were welcomed as indicating approval, they did not steer Nora toward improving or refining her leadership practices. She wanted specific and detailed feedback that provided direction for leadership growth. Looking back at former cluster managers' feedback, Nora described her worst feedback experience as one being invasive, judgmental, and directive. She elaborated: "They [cluster managers] would give

me judgmental and directive feedback, in that they tell me 'I am wrong' and tell me what to do and what not to do, with no deliberate thought given to the situation."

Universal professional development. When probed about the kinds of learning opportunities enjoyed and the extent of its effectiveness, Nora simply said, "We have a monthly PD" and "the only thing we learn from it is nothing, in that it repeats itself with the same stuff every time." The professional development sessions failed to demonstrate a commitment to supporting principals or recognize the complexity of instructional leadership. Nora perceived professional development as disastrous, as one-size-fits-all sessions rather than sessions which are designed to accommodate the participants' needs.

Additionally, the professional development sessions, as described by Nora, were "dull," "lifeless," "overly long," and "poorly organized," with non-professional goals being the driving force. She indicated that "cluster managers evaluated us several times and gave us a final report at the end. And yet that kind of information was not used to inform those in the professional development." She believed that identifying the strengths and weaknesses of principals "helps design which professional development activities meet the unique needs of each principal at an individual level."

Professional goals ignored. Even more shocking to Nora was the carelessness displayed by her former cluster managers when they failed to review her professional goals uploaded to the ADEC system at the beginning of the school year, thereby failing to design suitable professional development activities. Nora explained that "some principals selected their same professional goals for seven years and never got caught, questioned, or told to change. I don't think their cluster managers put even the slightest effort towards checking the system in the first place." She also wondered why her cluster managers

were not involved in the goal-setting process. Professional goals "should be reviewed" to ensure that they provide individual principals with a focus and direction needed to perform well in their work.

Summative Evaluation

Mandatory self-evaluation ignored. Summative evaluation, as described by Nora, was the end of the evaluation process, designed to determine "the competences of principal performance associated with the professional standards." In the summative evaluation, the primary cluster managers scheduled a final meeting with Nora to evaluate the overall quality of her performance. The first step to the summative evaluation was completing the self-evaluation form. Even though Nora had completed her self-evaluation prior to the final meeting, she was unable to discuss it or use it to add value to their evaluation of her. She said, "It was frustrating to have devoted so much time to prepare the self-evaluation when it was not reviewed or used in the summative meeting."

Highly Subjective judgment. In the summative evaluation, the self-evaluation is supposed to play a key role in the meeting. Nora mentioned that her fellow principals had "deep discussions about their individual self-evaluations with their cluster managers. Some of them managed to influence their scores while others could not." However, Nora was briefly walked through the rubric and then asked to leave the room while the two cluster managers discussed the final score. She felt her evaluators were just checking a box rather than ensuring the most accurate evaluation was made and that her individual scores had already been finalized before the meeting. She narrated:

> The results for the summative evaluation were planned previously, probably while they were on their way to my school. As a result, I began to ignore the results of

the evaluation because it was not objective. No systematic or reliable methods

were used to evaluate our true effectiveness…and …judgments relied heavily on

hunches and … moods and were darkened because of the unsystematic methods

and random practices.

Aside from feeling helpless, Nora expressed additional problematic issues of the school

evaluation and the unreasonable time duration for principals to improve their schools that

contribute to the unfair and non-objective evaluation process. She explained how her

cluster managers were influenced by her poor school evaluation report, discounting all

her efforts and the growth documented from the formatives to the summative evaluations.

Nora's cluster managers rated her lower to the bottom based on her low school evaluation

score.

 Although the school evaluation is independent of the principal evaluation, "some

of [the] former cluster managers felt compelled to reduce [the] evaluation scores to the

point where it was equivalent to that of school evaluation." Their rational was the thought

process, "how could someone possibly get high scores in one area of the evaluation while

simultaneously getting lower points in that same area in the school evaluation." To save

face, Nora believed they simply modified the principal evaluation score to parallel the

school evaluation score, which she argued "disregards objectivity and fails to capture the

true effectiveness of a school principal." School performance is not necessarily a

reflection of the principal's effectiveness as Nora explained:

 I was transferred to this new challenging school…. students were struggling

 academically, chronically missing school, and misbehaving. On top of that, many

 teachers were ineffective and resistant, and the school building was not in a good

shape! This combination of problems were pre-existing as I took over. With this in mind, it begins to be clear how impossible it would be for a new principal to transform the school from being poor to excellent condition in just one year.

The difficulties faced by transferred principals are real, especially when transferred into schools in crisis mode and chaos. As mentioned in Nora's previous statement, overcoming the barriers and improving quality in a low performance school takes several years. Cluster managers need to be aware of "the past history of each school as well as current challenges" in order to draft "realistic expectations for improvement." The current assumption by cluster managers that "one year is sufficient time" for a principal to raise a struggling school to one of excellence is unrealistic and sets the stage for perceived failure.

Feedback absent. Although the summative evaluation does determine where the principal's performance compares to the evaluation rubric, it provides neither feedback nor suggestions for future improvement. For Nora, most of her cluster managers provided no meaningful feedback during the formative evaluation, and there were no expectations for feedback during the summative evaluation. At the end of the evaluation process, Nora put no trust in the final score she was given because she believed most of her evaluation report failed to reflect the full scope of her performance. As mentioned earlier, her evaluation contains many "contradictions" and above all is "highly subjective and based largely on the opinions of the cluster managers."

Incentives and Consequences

Incentives absent. The current evaluation is not designed to reward principal performance, and more precisely, unable to distinguish between "good" and "poor" or

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"effective" and "ineffective" principals. In other words, the evaluation system treated everyone the same. Nora proposed that a principal evaluation system could work to the advantage of effective principals and to the disadvantage of ineffective principals, particularly if it employs a sufficient "incentive system" to influence their "behaviors and the relative efforts" committed to "improving their school performance." Such an incentive system required ADEC fix the deep-seated errors and defects present in the current evaluation system.

Punitive measures absent. In addition to the lack of incentives, there are no serious consequences for principals who display frequent failures or those who repeatedly receive poor evaluation scores. Nora said, "No examples can be found of principals who have been dismissed or disciplined because of poor performance." However, a system with embedded consequences would ensure principals take their career progression more seriously and thus strive harder to achieve expectations. The current system cannot adequately determine whether a termination is warranted, or whether a performance is excellent enough to be rewarded. This further emphasizes "the urgent need for ADEC to overhaul the principal evaluation system."

In summary, the major findings derived from Nora's interview are as follows:

- The current principal evaluation fails to achieve its primary goals and objectives because of the unclear supervisory roles outlined for unprepared cluster managers in carrying out principal evaluation process;

- Despite its ability to reflect the work of principals, evaluation criteria lacks clear guidelines, causing mixed interpretations and implementation of unrelated practices;

- Principals are mandated to create a comprehensive portfolio that is barely examined in the summative evaluation and largely ignored;

- The cluster managers having no unified definition of what is and is not valid evidence makes the job of gathering evidence harder for school principals;

- Many selected cluster managers are former principals with little or no experience to supervise and evaluate school principals;

- Many cluster managers rely on conversations with principals to gather information about their performance without observing their leadership practices;

- Many cluster managers play the "gotcha" game, abusing the natural functions of formative evaluation and creating a toxic environment that breaks trust and impedes the learning process for principals;

- A very few suitable cluster managers are qualified as principal supervisors who support, facilitate, monitor, and provide principals with necessary tools to improve their instructional leadership practices;

- The series of professional development sessions implemented in Al-Ain district are viewed as boring, repetitive, and unresponsive to the needs of principals;

- Not all principals are given the chance to discuss their self-evaluation with cluster managers at the summative evaluation meeting;

- The current evaluation is highly subjective and strongly influenced by other independent reforms, for example the way school evaluations are conducted by external inspectors;

- A principal newly transferred to a challenge-filled school is evaluated the same

  way as any other principal, without regard to the varying challenges and

  situation present in each school;

- The final evaluation report does not provide constructive feedback, comments,

  or suggestions to facilitate a principal's improvement; and

- No incentives or consequences are attached to the principal evaluation system.

The following case focuses on Shamsa, a high school principal. Shamsa has worked as a

school principal for 17 years and experienced the evaluation system for 8 years.

Case Three: Shamsa, High School Principal (Cycle III)

Evaluation Components

> *Consistent message between parties necessary*. Generally, Shamsa perceived the

purpose of evaluation as a means to "ensure the implementation of ADEC regulation and

policy," an opportunity to "improve leadership practices," and a channel to "disseminate

best practices" among schools through the assigned cluster manager working across the

same cycle. However, the current evaluation system unintentionally sends "mixed

messages" through its unequal quality variances in cluster managers' supervision and

thus, according to Shamsa, the purpose of principal evaluation is communicated and

performed differently across clusters. In her case, Shamsa believed the overall purpose

will not be met. Shamsa explained:

> From what I experienced, the purpose and expectations of evaluation vary from
>
> one cluster to another. It is confusing. You have no idea who to trust or to
>
> follow!! Their agenda is not consistent in most part, even among themselves,
>
> which I think cause a barrier to achieving the purpose of evaluation.

To her, mixed expectations of cluster managers lead to tragic conflicts—impeding the overall goal of the principal evaluation process. Shamsa continued that "if they [cluster managers] are not on the same page, there will be always mixed messages," burdening principals with seeking what and who to "trust and follow." Shamsa, in this case, suggested that purposes and expectations should be agreed upon among cluster managers and clearly articulated and communicated to the school principals to lessen the feeling of overload and fragmentation.

Criteria aligned with professional standards. In her interview, Shamsa expressed that the crafted evaluation criteria, in great part, communicated the work and professional standards of school principals. She stated, "My work as a school principal ranges from setting the strategic school improvement plan, observing classrooms, supporting teachers, leading community, and to analyzing student data" which reflected the "core of professional standards established for principals." Principal evaluation was previously based on a "shallow job description and unclear guidelines," which produced role conflict and subsequent strain as principals struggled to determine focus areas. Recent efforts by ADEC to develop professional standards that reflect areas of knowledge and roles for principals are expected to improve the principal evaluation process.

Inconsistent criteria interpretations and expectations. Shamsa, however, addressed two concerns regarding the evaluation rubric. First, the behavioral summary scales described in the rubric are not clear enough to build a pathway to success. Shamsa elaborated:

> Years ago, specifically at the beginning of the evaluation process, I looked at the
> rubric and I felt I need more examples to understand and accomplish certain level

of certain criterion. The behavioral summary was not clear, so I went and asked

my former cluster manager. She would explain and give me some examples and

ideas on how to achieve such and such…and it worked just fine eventually.

However, these examples and explanations are no longer acceptable by my new

cluster manager!! She would explain it in different ways and give even different

examples. The process is different from one cluster to another.

Shamsa's response reveals the confusion created by inadequate information in evaluation

the rubric, and she expresses the frustration of explanation divergence by cluster

managers. Therefore, the evaluation is largely subjective, chaotic, and inconsistent when

the explicit performance expectations are not clearly conveyed and detrimental when

interpretations and examples vary between cluster mangers. As she discussed, behavioral

summary descriptions in the rubric should provide "clear performance direction," clarify

"important performance characteristics," and be inherently "consistent across the board

within cluster manager team."

Strict centralization barrier to criteria achievement. As an eight-year veteran of

the evaluation process, the second concern addressed by Shamsa is the principal's lack of

autonomy with respect to personnel issues. The "existing strict centralization" restricted

principals from dismissing incompetent teachers who refused to change thus creating

barriers for meeting the third criterion of leading teaching and learning. "The education

system protected these teachers, and principals could not do anything about them but to

report, which is pointless and waste of time," she added. Shamsa reported that resistant

and incompetent teachers often refused to participate in professional development,

envisioned themselves as learners, or contributed to the learning process in any way. In

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other words, "They closed the door to seeing their potential…remaining stagnant in the area of improving themselves as adult learners."

During the interview, Shamsa shared a painful story about a teacher who refused to change her instructional practices after five years of ongoing support. Despite frequent classroom observation, instructional feedback, and sincere efforts to inspire, she could not motivate the teacher to become an adult learner. She sadly recalled "you cannot keep beating a dead horse. Her demeanor is unfixed, and you know it." However, when Shamsa sought guidance from cluster managers, "their thoughtless answer was this is a marginal problem, and they are all wrong." She elucidated:

> Even if there are only a few numbers of such teachers working in a school, their
>
> negative influence is contagious: they can draw energy from the whole and even
>
> sabotage the professional learning community in attempt to sustain the status quo.

Throughout the interview, Shamsa acknowledged the important role and responsibility of school principals to improve instructional practices of all staff, "but improving incompetent and resistant teachers who were unwilling to change and who know their profession is permanently secured" was a formidable challenge inherent in the centralized personnel practices of the district. Essentially, Shamsa believed her evaluation was "compromised" when incompetent teachers were ensured job security. She explained the only way to combat this issue was to "empower principals" in the Al-Ain public schools "to hire quality teachers" for their buildings and "fire or transfer incompetent ones."

Inconsistent portfolio evidence expectations. The professional portfolio was believed to be an important component of the professional evaluation process. Shamsa understood she was responsible for compiling a collection of evidence sorted into

"criterion-tabbed binders" and "hanging files," for her cluster manager to "thoroughly review each evidence submitted." Although principals were required to compile an organized professional portfolio, its review at the final evaluation meeting was at the discretion of the assigned cluster manager and was rarely requested.

As Shamsa compiled her portfolio for her final evaluation meeting, she included artifacts and documentation of her "school improvement plan, teacher professional development and evaluation forms, student work and data, survey results, staff meeting agenda"—things that largely reflected the principal professional standards. During the compilation process she struggled to find "compelling evidence" to prove staff learning and achievement at various levels. She attributed this hurdle to the lack of unanimous agreement among cluster managers on what constituted acceptable and valid evidence. Such different expectations between cluster managers can negatively impact the principal evaluation performance. She explained:

> Every cluster manager has different understanding of the meaning of acceptable evidence. Two years ago, I remember one of the evidence I presented was rejected by my former cluster manager when it was accepted last year by this current cluster manager…Besides, we were given a very basic orientation on documenting but with no adequate details to guide us with amassing valid evidence.

Shamsa noted that every two years she worked with different cluster managers with different views of acceptable evidence "which is confusing and disturbing." She added that, "Supervisors have to come with a unified definition of compelling evidence accompanied with clear examples, and to provide follow-ups with their principals to

ensure proper implementation." Professional development sessions can be used to "clarify forms of acceptable evidence" relevant to the scope of evaluation to ensure principals build and defend a complete professional portfolio.

The Cluster Managers

  Unclear roles and responsibilities. The role of the cluster manager in Al-Ain schools is varied and while they share common roles, their performance expectations and implementation differ according to Shamsa. Individual cluster managers, almost without exception, performed "mechanical and routine tasks" that included "visiting schools weekly" during the year, serving as a "liaison" between schools and Al-Ain central office, keeping principals abreast of "recent updates and policies," and checking the workflow of "daily school operations that aligned with ADEC agenda." However, the difference in task implementation hinges on their individual role values, expectations, and expertise, which, according to Shamsa, affects the overall quality of the evaluation process. She shared:

    Watching this scene, repeated many times throughout my working with multiple

    cluster managers, I observed a sharp dissonance of role values, expectations, and

    expertise among them that affect the overall quality of the process. Sometimes

    and because there is no guideline directing their work, I feel ... you know … it is

    up to their personal effort to make the process a success.

Differing role values, expectations, and expertise between cluster managers is a source of frustration and dissatisfaction for Shamsa who concludes that such differences resulting from a lack of formal guidelines, create a deviation from standards resulting in quality variance between poor and excellent. She pointed out that exercising "haphazard

practices" prevents the evaluation process from accomplishing "its desired goals and anticipated benefits" to school principals. When cluster managers lack focus and common expectations, they follow different paths and are, therefore, unable to offer sound supervision and evaluation.

Formative Evaluation

Inefficient formative process. Formative evaluation process was a vehicle that Shamsa felt cluster managers should capitalize on to strengthen professionalism among school leaders by providing critical "along the way" feedback to guide their leadership practices in response to individual principal's needs. She mentioned that the formative process was precursory to, and complementary of, the summative evaluation. However, she felt the current formative process was inefficient and thereby created doubt as to its validity and usefulness. She stated, "Not all cluster managers are the same in respect with supervisory skills, but most of them are ineffective, which detract from the essence and quality of formative evaluation."

Management focused supervision. Despite eight years of interaction with various cluster managers, Shamsa doubted that any of them comprehend the broad spectrum of work in which she was engaged within her school. The failure of cluster managers to go beyond conversation and dialogue within the principal's office during their weekly visits, limited their perspective on her duties and responsibilities and ultimately her leadership abilities. She expressed concern that cluster managers had not observed her leadership practices or witnessed her interactions with teachers and staff within her building but focused on school management issues. Thus, their impressions are limited to what she

expresses during conversation and does not necessarily provide a well-rounded view of her capabilities. Shamsa shared her experience:

> My cluster managers always sit down and have endless conversations about different topics of school management, from preparations for standardized exams to new legislations, finance, and parent and teacher complaints and so on. They listen and take notes about my responses, but all of this has nothing to do with my instructional leadership roles. I am unsure how they can supervise if they rarely care to observe me in action and tell me how I am performing.

Her statement reiterates her concern that cluster managers largely focus their attention on management issues at the cost of "instructional leadership" which should be the priority during each supervisory visit. She also stressed that learning in action is far more effective than listening and note taking; therefore, time should be allotted to shadow school leaders in action to obtain a full understanding of the "lay of the land," experience the "principal's daily activities," and observe "their leadership capabilities." She is dissatisfied with the current formative process because of the always-management-focused interaction, expertise deficiency, inadequate instructional skills, and poor supervisory support of cluster managers.

Model supervision explained. However, over her eight years of evaluation, Shamsa worked with six cluster managers and only one approximated "ideal" supervisory practices. Unfortunately, she only worked with this "exceptional cluster manager" for three months and appreciated the crafted supervision experience in such a short time. Shamsa reflected on the experience:

This distinct cluster manager approached supervision with a focused lens. She

spent sacred time to see my observing skills in teachers' classrooms, facilitated

our forthcoming discussions through the use of reflective questioning, joined me

in various school meetings, interacted with other administrators and key faculty

members, monitored school progress, and collected data form stakeholders about

the school.

Her interim cluster manager understands that principals are key figures in "blocking or

promoting a change in schools," and therefore, their leadership behaviors are worth

observing and examining in real-life situations.

Shamsa noted that the cluster manager shadowing her teachers' classrooms and

discussing observations were essential for the refinement of her instructional leadership

skills. Such practices and activities open doors to further reflective dialogue and growth.

Aside from classroom observation, the scope of examination includes joining school

meetings, monitoring school progress, and interacting with and collecting data from other

school members. Such experiences highlight that the importance of cluster manager's

visibility, not only with the principal as an individual, but also within the school building

to monitor the school performance which is "effected by the work of the principals."

With her interim cluster manager, Shamsa realized that the cluster managers can

establish a more structured format for supervisory meetings. Specifically, they can

provide focus by setting agendas, goals, and reviewing learning outcomes to meet the

principal's needs and guide successful supervision. This degree of latitude can be used to

pursue "personalized, engaging, collaborative, and meaningful supervision" as an

effective evaluation path. In the end, as Shamsa explicitly expressed cluster managers are "the key to successful principal evaluation."

Incongruous professional development. Shamsa shared her current professional development experience with ADEC:

It is a practice-based professional development where school principals of the whole cycle [same school level] gather and shared their best practices. It could be interesting at the beginning to listen and hear different experiences and practices of different people but at some point, it gets boring and less fulfilling because of how it is structured and not responsive to principal needs and work. Our professional development is not linked to our professional goals or based on our previous evaluation data, or at least mine that I can tell.

Shamsa described her current professional development program as uncoordinated, incoherent, unsystematic, unresponsive to principals' needs, and generally detached from real work in the school. The informal sharing of practices may be "helpful in the short term, but not enough for long-term sustainability." Unfortunately, the professional development failed to link professional goals and principal evaluation results.

Professional goals ignored. Despite the importance ADEC placed on achieving professional goals, Shamsa stated that her goals were not reviewed, revised, or revisited throughout the year by the majority of cluster managers. She explained that at the beginning of the academic year every principal must develop and submit 3-5 concise goals specific for the professional development needs. Her goals typically focused on "data-driven decision-making" and developing "effective professional development programs for teachers." Shamsa emphasized her need to master collecting, reading,

analyzing, and interpreting various forms of school data (e.g., graphics, visual displays, statistics, etc.) to make fact-based decisions in creating professional development programs that meet her teachers' needs.

Nevertheless, Shamsa felt her professional goals were not considered or incorporated into any supervision to optimize her learning capacity. "If these goals are not brought out as a living factor in every supervisory practice and conversation, progress toward fulfilling such goals will be haphazard at best" she said. This problem was also exacerbated by cluster managers not utilizing professional goals to plan principals' professional development program. Ultimately, coherent alignment between professional goals, professional development, and evaluation to ensure maximum leverage and effectiveness in principal performance was not apparent in meetings with most cluster managers.

Shamsa stated that "every program is a separate entity, fragmented and disconnected from and to one another." She also singled out "the benefits can be substantial" when "areas of practice are highly aligned." She called for a coherent, dynamic, customizable framework where each learning opportunity provided for principals exists in tandem with each other and works in a cyclical manner to ensure maximum cohesion and usefulness.

Summative Evaluation

Rituals of summative evaluation. As the name suggests, the summative evaluation is the conclusion of the principal evaluation process and typically "occurs in May." Two cluster managers served as arbiters: the primary cluster assigned to supervise the school principal from the beginning of the academic year to the final meeting, and the secondary

cluster as an unbiased participant involved only at the final meeting. A key component of the summative evaluation is the self-evaluation completed by the principal. Shamsa completed this key step prior to her final evaluation meeting.

Unfair, coercive discussion. During the summative meeting, the cluster managers compared, Shamsa's self-evaluation with their evaluation of her. She stated that similarities between evaluations saved time and expedited the process, but any differences initiated discussion and warranted retrieval of solid supporting evidence to reach an agreement. A recurrent question during the summative evaluation was "why do you see yourself high in this criterion? Shamsa noted that sometimes "the cluster managers did not agree" with her self-evaluation in certain areas, despite compelling supportive evidence. After several summative evaluations, Shamsa realized that there was a problem with the process. She narrated:

> When the summative evaluation was over, I found myself asking and pondering
> on these questions: Why could not they [cluster managers] accept many areas I
> rated high in my self-evaluation even though backed up with compelling
> evidence. Why did they make us feel we cannot reach the ceiling of standards?

She speculates that cluster managers walked an interesting line that included how they were perceived by others. Shamsa felt that the cluster managers refused to accept a compelling argument with supporting evidence because "they did not want to give high ratings in certain criteria" and "created conflict with their fellows." She expressed her concern that an underlying coercive obligation to keep balanced scoring across principal evaluations existed as evidenced by her experiences in summative evaluations over eight years and speculation circulated among school principals.

Highly subjective evaluation. Another critical issue surrounding the summative evaluation was the methods used to gauge the principal's performance. The evaluator's subjective judgment of the principal played a significant role in the summative evaluation, even though the overreliance on discretion practices was a major weakness of the process. An example of poor judgment was the score given to student achievement criteria. Although student achievement is a vital component of principal evaluation, the weight assigned to it varies between cluster managers with no clear scoring procedure, thus leaving it to their discretion. "If your student achievement is high, your score will be high. It is not about the exact growth made between last years and the current year" she said.

Shamsa's concern is that despite execution of strong instructional leadership practices and their efforts to make tremendous change in schools, principals still face the nagging fear that their students will perform poorly on annual national tests. School principals who work hard yet experience poor results in their schools and ultimately receive a poor evaluation score, lose trust in the evaluation system. Shamsa believed that while subjectivity can be good, it is important to examine all variables in the specific context being evaluated to ensure fair subjective judgment.

For example, in the case of student academic performance criterion, variables such as length of principal's stay in a school as well students' prior academic performance should be taken into account before giving a score on such criterion. Moreover, regular observations and field visits must be conducted to see key leadership behaviors at various levels of competence that facilitates better judgment. Shamsa

suggested the school district train cluster managers "to be objective in their subjective judgments."

Feedback absent. The final evaluation rubric reflecting marks assigned by the cluster managers for each of the 5 standards and 18 criteria, was delivered to the principal at the summative evaluation. Shamsa indicated the final report lacked detailed feedback or comments, and therefore, provided no useful information to guide and improve future performance. She expressed that a report without "educational discussion on improvement is not helpful" for principals wanting to strengthen their leadership performance. "It is like use your brain and figure out things yourself—that is our mission." Throughout the eight years of final evaluations, Shamsa did not receive individualized feedback from cluster managers to help her improve or avoid mistakes.

Incentives and Consequences

Incentives absent. There is no incentive directly linked to the principal evaluation performance but rather directly linked to school performance evaluation" which is conducted by external inspectors working in Irtiqa program. A high score in Irtiqa's school inspection is necessary for principal promotion to "executive principal," but the promotion is ironic when the principal's evaluation on performance is low. Speaking of this, she elaborated:

> I just knew some low-performing principals got selected to be the executive principal based on their school performance. There is no much information about this kind of job because it is new, but from what I heard and understood, it is similar to the job of cluster manager. The only difference is that those selected

principals are more likely to remain working on their schools besides supervising other principals they are assigned to.

Punitive measures absent. Likewise, no consequences are tied directly to the summative evaluation. All principals were treated the same despite differences in "abilities," "accomplishments," and "leadership qualities." It is important for the evaluation system to recognize excellent principals who exhibit improvement in their leadership practices. In similar vein, it is also important for the system to have effective means of identifying principals who demonstrate no interest or capacity for growth in their leadership practices in spite of support provided in the formative evaluation. Shamsa believed the principal evaluation process implemented in Al-Ain district was too biased and subjective, and not rigorous enough for high-stakes decisions such as "compensation," "promotion," or "termination."

In summary, the major findings derived from Shamsa's interview are as follows:

- Mixed expectations among cluster managers create an achievement barrier for the desired goals and purposes of principal evaluation;

- Evaluation criteria are aligned with professional standards that set forth the knowledge, skills, and dispositions principals should know and focus on to fulfill their work duties and responsibilities;

- Behavioral summaries described in the continuum scales of some criteria do not provide adequate information to elicit desired performance;

- The principal complains about her lack of autonomy to dismiss resistant and incompetent teachers, partially affecting the evaluation performance;

- In arranging the portfolio, the principal faces difficulty in amassing compelling evidence because there is no agreement concerning the core descriptions of such evidence among cluster managers;

- Having no formal guidelines or standards dictating the work of cluster managers creates mistrust in the evaluation process;

- Most cluster managers lacked supervisory expertise, and therefore, affect the quality of supervision;

- Most cluster managers spend all their time in the principal's office discussing school management rather than observing the principal's instructional leadership practices in action;

- A very few cluster managers establish a well-structured supervision and evaluation to provide an effective and meaningful learning experience for the principal;

- The professional goals, professional development, and evaluation implemented in Al-Ain district are seen as uncoordinated, incoherent, unsystematic, and unresponsive to the need of principals;

- The principal evaluation is over-reliant on subjectivity and discretion practices of cluster managers;

- The voice of cluster managers to rate the principal in a certain criterion is stronger than the principal, even in cases where the principal presents solid evidence to support his or her argument;

- It is believed that not rating school principal's high at certain criteria is a collective strategy by cluster managers to maintain a balance across principal evaluations and prevent any conflict or suspicion;

- The final evaluation report lacks feedback or comments that can be used to help principals enhance their leadership performance; and

- The principal evaluation is not tied to incentives and/or high-stake employment decisions.

The following case focuses on Majed, an elementary school principal. Majed has worked as a school principal for 18 years and experienced the evaluation system for 8 years.

Case Four: Majed, Elementary School Principal (Cycle I)

Evaluation Components

Comprehensive overall required. Majed explicitly stated that the two-fold purpose of principal evaluation was: (1) improve "the leadership practices of principals" and (2) help the system "determine summative decisions regarding career promotion or rewards" that may be given for exemplary performance. Further, these should be reflected in the dichotomy of formative and summative evaluation. However, Majed explained, "[Such] was not fulfilled as ADEC bargained for." Within his own evaluation process, Majed noted that a structured support system, systematic follow-ups, and real pressure forcing principals to ever change or improve was lacking.

The quality of the evaluation process was mostly average, or below, resulting from various shortfalls in the evaluation system and varying degrees of cluster manager quality. "ADEC has to overhaul all the system's faults and bring in highly qualified supervisors to achieve the outlined purposes as planned and with constant high levels of

quality," he stated, but cautioned that "overhauling must be comprehensive" not just in

parts as ADEC typically did. Furthermore, by considering one aspect of the problem and

leaving the other, the problem "would never be entirely solved."

Inconsistent interpretations and expectations. Current evaluation criteria with 18

embedded elements within 5 performance standards adequately "reflected and

represented professional standards" of the principal's work. They signaled the defining

core knowledge, skills, and values associated with effective instructional leadership.

However, despite its unity with the principal's work, the evaluation criteria and its

behavioral summaries lacked clarity necessary to guide leadership roles—void of leading

particulars and specific examples to demonstrate the required performance.

Even worse, the cluster managers were unable to convey a unified interpretation

of each evaluation criterion, suggesting their erroneous thinking that principals should be

highly knowledgeable and autonomous from day one of evaluations. Majed also

wondered if "they [cluster managers] have the least idea of this problem existing." He

recounted his experience as he faced two cluster managers providing two different

interpretation sets for the same criterion:

> I remember carrying out new projects as a continuation of my previous work with
>
> my former cluster manager, which we believed would move my score to the next
>
> level if I showed effectiveness. We were aiming at improving parent involvement
>
> through lunching innovative electronic software intended to keep families
>
> connected to school's updates, events, and their child's academic progress. I was
>
> almost at the end of the process when my cluster manager in charge that year told
>
> me, 'this is not going to raise your score! What you are doing is actually where

you are now!' He then proceeded to explain and provide examples on how to

reach the required performance level.

Majed's reflection verifies that each cluster manager has different expectations and

interpretations of the same performance level. In addition, while not required, he

suggested cluster managers should conduct evaluation criteria-focused workshops for

each school cycle. This practice would clarify the meaning and purpose of criterion,

which when supplemented with clear-cut examples and practical scenarios pertaining to

their associated elements, provides "all practitioners with common understanding and a

good grasp of the process."

Rigid, excessive centralization. Excessive centralization, causing internal

inefficiency, was another problem requiring careful attention in the evaluation criteria.

For example, the "leading teaching and learning standard" demands school principals

enhance and sustain high teaching quality, but restricted centralization was a barrier to

school principals making major employment decisions such as hiring and firing

personnel. Thus, ineffective teachers remained "protected and secure" in their profession.

ADEC has complete authority over almost everything: the yearly "allocated budget, the

curriculum content, technology, policies, and human resources."

When asked to clarify, Majed recalled incidents where it seemed impossible to

remove ineffective teachers despite how poorly they performed on their evaluations. He

stated, "Even with accumulative documentations that prove ineffective teaching, school

principals have no choice but to accept the bitter reality of keeping the 'grossly

ineffective' teachers who are protected by law." In effect, many cluster managers,

without thinking, tend to rate principals down in several elements that fall under "leading

learning and teaching." For example, they underrate them in curriculum, teaching effectiveness, and learning environment—all influenced by teacher behaviors, as shown in Figure 4.2.

PRINCIPAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION - Leading Teaching and Learning

Principals are the educational and instructional leaders of schools. They set high standards for teaching practices and student achievement. They understand the curriculum and are one source of wisdom and professional knowledge for the teachers of the school. Using this knowledge, they create collaborative and accountable structures in the school to produce quality teaching and assessment practices and high level learning outcomes for students.

Element	Pre-Foundation	Foundation	Emerging	Established	Accomplished	Exemplary
Curriculum.	Has a basic understanding of the ADEC curriculum and standards.	Demonstrates an understanding of current approaches to effective teaching and learning. A system exists in the school to ensure the linking of teaching and learning to ADEC curriculum and standards.	And… Ensures the integration of heritage, culture and ICT into the delivery of the curriculum. Has structures and curriculum in place to meet the needs of SEN and G&T students. Ensures school assessment procedures are valid, reliable and well planned.	And… Establishes structures to ensure teachers critically evaluate and plan their curriculum delivery. Ensures teachers work collaboratively to plan and evaluate the curriculum and ensure it is meeting the needs of all students, including SEN and G&T.	And… Establishes a regular cycle of curriculum review that uses effective interpretation of data to evaluate curriculum effectiveness. Ensures that the school provides a rich and diverse curriculum which incorporates aspects of career and life planning preparing students for the next stages of their lives.	And… Has a well organised, team based curriculum structure, that: • Integrates learning across curriculum areas • Has reliable assessments that inform curriculum and whole school planning • Meets the needs of all students. And is regularly reviewed in the context of student achievement and national standards. The school offers on-going, high quality enrichment activities and a choice of sporting and cultural activities for its students.
Teaching effectiveness	Has some understanding of what constitutes a good lesson and the planning required for this.	Observes each teacher at least once per semester. Provides quality written and verbal feedback on pedagogy, planning and assessment. Provides schedules and structures to ensure individual and collaborative planning, teaching, assessing and evaluating.	And… Demonstrates a thorough understanding of current approaches to effective teaching and learning. Ensures and monitors that teachers regularly assess student learning in accordance with ADEC policy and use this data inform future planning to meet the needs of all students.	And… Provides professional direction to teachers by encouraging innovation in classroom practice and setting of rigorous achievement targets.	And… Builds a vibrant, active collaborative learning culture in the school that is focused on student achievement and professional growth. Students are actively and consistently involved in the learning process and take responsibility for their own learning.	And… Has a rigorous, cyclical program of evaluating teacher effectiveness and linking this to teachers' professional development. Ensures individual and collective responsibility for students learning. Uses all forms of data to guide planning for improvement.
Student achievement	Accepts current levels of student achievement as being satisfactory.	Leads staff to analyse and uses basic data from EMSA, PIPs, CEPA, national exams and continuous assessments to inform improvement in curriculum planning and delivery.	And… A cycle is established for periodically monitoring student achievement against set targets and high standards. Challenges underachievement of staff and students.	And… Celebrations of success and achievement are embedded in the school culture. Encourages student self-assessment as a form of measuring progress and setting targets for improvement.	And… Have clearly defined and high expectations for student learning. Ensures a consistent and continuous focus by all staff on student achievement, using data and benchmarks to monitor all student progress.	And… In collaboration with all staff, uses appropriate data to set rigorous, concrete goals for student achievement and constantly monitors the progress towards those goals. School is able to map student progress against learning/action plans over a number of years.
Learning Environment	A list for all students with physical or identified psychological needs has been prepared. Management of student behaviour is based upon the individual responses of staff.	School policies acknowledge access, absenteeism, inclusion and diversity for all students. Effective IEPs are developed, as appropriate, and students' achievement is regularly monitored. The school has a student behaviour	And… Ensures teachers use a variety of approaches to cater for a variety of student learning needs. School policies and procedures ensure a safe and healthy school environment.	And… Student behaviour is successfully and consistently managed according to a well developed and consistently implemented plan. Teachers create a positive learning	And… Classroom physical environments across the school are vibrant and stimulating and support student achievement. All staff are actively involved in the management of all aspects of the learning environment.	And… Manages and organises all aspects of the school environment to ensure it meets the needs of the curriculum, health and safety regulations, and promotes student engagement and achievement, as demonstrated over a number of years.

Figure 4.2. Elements of the Standard Leading Teaching and Learning

In this respect, Majed recommended greater flexibility for the sakes of the evaluation and the students' rights to quality education. Alternatively, granting principals a major voice in hiring new personnel and selecting the best candidates for the school is a positive step. Additionally, because of their intimate acquaintance with students and understanding of school needs, they know much better than Human Resource Department officials from ADEC.

Inconsistent portfolio use. When reflecting on portfolio practices, Majed articulated how it was considered a dynamic and evolving cognitive model for the school's development, although it did not receive the necessary attention of cluster managers. "I continued creating my school portfolio with the collective support of my

administrative teams, for I love it dearly, particularly in that it brings forth meaningful sources and evidence of our school." While some principals' portfolios were heavy on documentation and decorative items, Majed felt that they often lacked the passion and authenticity of principals dedicated to personal, professional, and school improvement.

Majed felt that portfolios should be treated with justice, for some principals' portfolios "are filled with heavy documentations" and "decorations" but lightly with "passion and authenticity." A broad array of benefits from effective portfolios included showcasing school trajectory growth; anticipating problems and conflict; displaying thoughtful actions and solutions; determining improvement direction; keeping school personnel focused on student achievement; and presenting genuine assortments of teachers' and students' work. In other words, the portfolio is the embodiment of school character, a mirror that "reflects the entire educational program and activities followed in the school."

The Cluster Managers

Vital mentor for leadership development. Drawing from eight years working with six cluster managers, Majed defined them as people specifically assigned to improve principals, help them solve school problems, and provide them with necessary tools and resources. Cluster managers were "the first-line managers" responsible for enforcing regulations and policies and ensuring tasks and responsibilities were completed appropriately. They were also the "key communication figures" between ADEC and the school, ensuring smooth and congenial work environment for school personnel and informing ADEC of major issues that the school is unable to fix. However, such roles and responsibilities were broad and inconsistent, undertaken differently from one to another.

Little or no specific training in the areas of supervision and evaluation was an area of concern Majed noticed in the cluster managers. This, he felt, made them more hardwired to their prior experience. However, he realized that "not all of them were bad… I had quite some good experience with a few who came with passion to pass down the craft of leadership" he explained. Despite the lack of consistent guidelines, Majed admitted having both positive and negative experiences with cluster managers as each brought "prior experience," "different traits," "beliefs," and "concerns" with them to the principal evaluation process.

Moreover, the cluster managers' supervisory skills, he asserted, varied by degree with performance "scattered along a continuum from nothing, to poorness, averages, and outliers." His takeaway lesson was: "In order to succeed, we need a strong support from capable cluster managers." Through several segments of the interview, the importance of cluster managers in the professional lives of principals was stressed and likened to "sustenance" providing supervisory "vitamins and nutrition" crucially important to the enhancement and development growth of their leadership capacity.

Formative Evaluation

Cluster managers impact effectiveness. Though the major goal of the formative evaluation process is to strengthen leadership practices, Majed believed that in most cases such was either absent or abusive. He stated:

> As a cluster manager, you are not totally out of the picture of the entire process and you are not out there on the school playground to prove our leadership is full of errors and start giving orders. [Rather,] you are there to observe and guide us on how to improve and refine our practices.

Majed reflected on his learning experience working with cluster managers:

> The quality I have seen so far varies; sometimes it is completely absent,
>
> sometimes not so bad. But I feel stagnant not learning anything,
>
> sometimes very bad that I try to tolerate and let go until the end of the year hoping
>
> for a good cluster manager next year. In few other times, it is very good and adds
>
> to my learning growth.

More weight is given to negative than positive learning experiences in the overall formative evaluation. To illustrate, Majed provided four types of cluster managers demonstrating different levels of performance and effectiveness in the formative process.

> The first type included the cluster managers who supervise in absentia, rarely coming to school and minimally communicating through phone or emails. He wondered how effective the supervision and evaluation could be if they self-excluded themselves from the process. While minimal supervision may hold little weight on process improvement, long absences can negatively impact evaluation. Majed explained that cluster managers who were not in the building could not effectively capture snapshots of the principal's work, and therefore, were unable to honestly review "leadership performance" to provide an appropriate guidance, and ultimately a fair judgment on the final evaluation report. He shared some common behaviors of the in-absentia cluster managers:

> They seldom came to the school, ask this close-ended question 'is everything
>
> alright in the school?' and immediately left the school without saying a word after
>
> I replied, 'yes, everything is fine.' I will not hear from them until the end of the

semester. What strikes me is at the summative evaluation, they evaluate as if they

know everything, in spite of their complete absence.

In comparison, the "not so bad" cluster managers who inclined to practice so-called

supervision behind closed doors, never stepping out to examine how principal leadership

shaped the school. These cluster managers burned precious time discussing "the school's

well-being, policies, and management issues for hours," overlooking topics related to the

very core practices of "instructional leadership," which were the driving force for school

effectiveness." From his experiences, Majed believed that authentic supervision "extends

beyond ordinary conversational practices," stretches across "school improvement plans

and goals," and goes outside to reach "classroom instruction within the school."

The third, and worst, type Majed experienced was the controlling authoritarian

cluster manager whose supervisory practices were more directive, domineering, and

forceful. This group's trademark is chain-of-command and position, with myopic

judgments limited to their way of doing things. Majed recalled an incident when a cluster

manager disapproved of how things operated in the school and ordered change based on

his way of operating. He stated, "It was always them, not us, as if they were inspectors

not supervisors." This practice contaminated with "toxic relations" in which learning was

undeniably impossible.

The fourth and final type of cluster manager, and that most preferred by Majed,

was the one whose experience in "human relations and leadership" made them more

attuned to the principals' needs and able to express expectations relevant to the "adult

learning experience." Majed explained that "they know your skill level and potential and

so approach their supervision accordingly." These supervisors used a "non-directive supervisory approach" which is captured in the following observation:

One of my cluster managers usually attempts to have me come up with my own solutions to leadership problems. Sometimes, she cues me a bit with a little push to get the solution. Other times, she lets me carry on with my wrong decisions with the purpose of experiencing failure and learning from my mistakes…other times taking risks!

Majed learned that excellence cannot be achieved without taking risks, trying out new innovative programs, and applying new strategies and best proven practices. He explained that this cluster manager facilitated learning through discovery. Similar cluster managers were successful in setting the stage and tone of supervision appropriate for the principal from the beginning. It is important that cluster managers "diagnose principals' abilities" and apply a "supervisory approach that matches their individual level" in a supportive learning environment fueled by "trust and transparency" that makes "learning easy and possible."

Ineffective feedback. Feedback throughout the formative evaluation process was reflective of the cluster manager's personality and experience, ranging from "absent," to "superficial," to "negative," to "constructive." Majed explained that absent refers to cluster managers in absentia; superficial to those focusing on management and unrelated issues; negative to those exercising authoritative practices; and lastly constructive to those establishing supportive and nonjudgmental environments. Although cluster managers approach supervision differently, their expertise and attitudes play an important role in determining the effectiveness of the formative process.

Disorganized, ineffective professional development. On the topic of professional development currently implemented in the Al-Ain district, Majed stated, "Honestly, I cannot consider them as real PDs! They occur once a month and focus on best shared practices, end of the story." He further noted, "Principals tell stories about their best practices but when they start receiving rhetorical questions from other participant principals, they could not give reasonings for how these practices worked. At that time, cluster managers were watching, quietly listening without engaging." Because the typical cluster manager is either American or Canadian, PD sessions tend to be difficult when they are delivered in Arabic rather than their native English, forcing them to be inactive participants in discussion they don't understand.

In addition to providing professional development in a language the clusters managers barely understand, the district's sessions appeared unplanned and failed to address various individual needs of principals. "If the PDs are to be successful," he affirmed, "they must be focused and adapted to the learning needs and opportunities of the principals." He continued, "Our inputs were not taken in planning PD activities. I remember one time they gave us a form to identify areas of growth and interests, but nothing was included. It was just the same content, sharing our best practices." While sharing best practices does provide a learning experience for some, its value is "lost" when it becomes "a redundant exercise without opportunity for "meaningful discussion" that prompts growth.

Professional goals ignored. As Majed clarified, having set professional goals from the beginning established areas of need while still enabling principals to modify or change through the process as they fulfilled these goals. His goals were designed

according to his low performance manifested in last year's evaluation rubric. He then explained that his former cluster managers "were never involved in the process, never checked or asked! They might think this is our sole responsibility, I guess."

Majed provided examples of how he required teachers "to set professional goals based on their instructional needs" and overall "school improvement goals." Additionally, he monitored their progress and provided assistance whenever possible to meet their goals. "I wish my cluster manager treated me the same way I treat my teachers," he expressed. A cluster manager must "monitor professional goals more closely" while observing actual leadership practices that could reveal changes in practice over time and that could allow principals to reflect their understanding through real performance.

Summative Evaluation

Rituals of summative evaluation. The summative evaluation for performance competency occurs at the end of year and "primarily assesses the school principal's performance and determines the final score." Majed mentioned that the evaluation committee consisted of primary and secondary cluster managers who set the day and time for the evaluation defense. While the primary cluster manager led the evaluation, the secondary cluster manager came only at the summative evaluation to ensure the process runs smoothly according to ADEC's guideline.

Reflecting on the roles of the secondary cluster managers at the summative evaluation, Majed noted they sat further away, remained silent most of the time, and kept jotting down what he supposed were comments, impressions, or suggestions—things that were more likely to be addressed and discussed to determine the final score. According to

Majed "There could be some other purposes of the secondary [cluster manager] that I have yet to experience."

Mandatory self-evaluation. The cluster managers required Majed to complete a self-evaluation comparing his evaluation with their evaluation of him prior to the final face-to-face meeting. During the final meeting the cluster managers examined both evaluations looking for differences across the various criteria. Majed highlighted his discussion with the committee as "normal." He stated: "If they notice I evaluated myself higher than what they assigned me in any criterion or element, then the question would arise, 'Why did you rate yourself high here? Explain more." After this review process, which included a heated discussion to settle differences, Majed asked the cluster managers to modify their ratings to reflect what he believed he earned. "Sometimes, you could challenge. You are encouraged to think out loud and voice what you find confusing. Other times—especially with inflexible cluster managers—you cannot. Their score is divine, none-challengeable."

Highly subjective evaluation. Overall, as Majed expressed, the summative evaluation was extremely subjective. He explained that if two independent cluster managers evaluated a principal in one year, they came out with "different evaluation results for the same principal". With each cluster manager having their own way of doing things, they naturally have varying differences in visiting the school, approaching supervision, and in monitoring progress. This is reflective of the different types of cluster managers Majed experienced in his evaluation span. He felt ambivalent about his final score noting "Some years, I feel dissatisfied; others, satisfied. It all depends on whoever is supervising and evaluating me."

Feedback absent. While discussing the generation of the final report and feedback, Majed laughingly stated, "You are mistaken if you think you would receive a detailed report with feedback. What you get is mere statements that reflect your performance on the evaluation rubric, as simple as that." He expounded with an example:

> The report is the evaluation rubric itself, which the cluster manager used to check off boxes to indicate my category level performance in all criteria or elements. So, for example, if my cluster rated me low as 'emerging' in two elements within the criteria of leading strategically, this means I am weak in these two elements and clearly means that I need to do more to reach the next level. No feedback is provided though.

Figure 4.3 illustrates Majed's point above.

Element	Pre-Foundation	Foundation	Emerging	Established	Accomplished	Exemplary
	☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ■ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	☐
Vision and Strategic Goals.	Has a personal vision for the school, and now needs to lead and implement a process for developing a shared school vision with teachers and parents.	Leads and implements a process for developing a shared vision and strategic goals that reflect clear expectations for students and staff. Maintains a focus on the vision and strategic goals throughout the school year.	And... Promotes a vision of high standards and expectations for all students and staff. Initiates collaborative changes to the vision and goals based on data, feedback & evidence, resulting in improved school performance.	And... Inspires and gains the commitment of others towards the school's vision, mission, values, and organizational goals.	And... Ensures that the school's vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals drive decisions and inform the culture of the school.	And... Is recognised as an inspirational leader by both peers and key ADEC personnel. They play key roles in shaping and guiding the Emirate's educational vision.
	Developing ☐ Consolidating ■	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ■ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐		☐
Leading Change	Is comfortable with the environment within which the school operates. Responds to the changes mandated by ADEC.	Identifies changes necessary for the improvement of student learning. Makes effort to introduce necessary changes supported by appropriate strategies.	And... Uses different processes and strategies to build agreement for change. Routinely engages with staff and key community members when considering ways to improve student achievement and school processes.	And... Guides others through change and addresses resistance to change. Uses feedback, data, evidence and research from a variety of sources to justify and initiate change	And... Regularly and systematically reviews and communicates the impacts of change processes to staff and parents. Understands the change processes and strategies most likely to be effective in various situations.	And... Is the driving force behind major initiatives that help students acquire 21st century skills. Systematically challenges the status quo by leading change that has potentially beneficial student outcomes.
	Developing ☐ Consolidating ■	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ■ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	☐
School Planning	Data collection and analysis processes that connect to the school improvement plan (SIP) are developing.	Understands requirements regarding the SIP and oversees development of a plan that includes staff and parent involvement. Incidental use of student performance data is evident in the SIP.	And... Facilitates the successful adoption of the SIP, aligned to the schools and ADEC's mission and goals. Uses a wide range of performance data to help inform development of strategic priorities in the SIP.	And... Systematically collects, analyses, and uses a wide range of data regarding the school's progress toward strategic goals and objectives. A well established cycle of continuous improvement informs all school planning.	And... Uses extensive analysis of a broad range of school performance data, spanning more than one year, to: • Measure the school's progress • To inform the process of introducing, retaining or retiring initiatives, projects and strategies.	And... Inspires, leads and assists peers, and various other school leaders in strategic planning processes.

Figure 4.3. Elements of the Standard Leading Strategically

Majed lamented the lack of feedback on evaluation performance, which has a major role in determining further learning. Frustrated, he added, "There is no specific feedback guiding me on how to improve, but only broad statements. They give me a compass without a needle!" Independently, Majed translated those statements to be his

professional goals and to be his focus for the next year because he knew that most incoming cluster managers would probably not review the previous evaluation to understand his current performance. "It is like it all ends within the summative evaluation," he stated.

Incentive and Consequences

Incentives absent. Since the establishment of principal evaluations, Majed confirmed that the evaluation system failed to honor principals who received "very good" or "excellent" scores in their individual evaluation. Therefore, he encouraged ADEC to create a workplace reward system that would recognize hard-working principals and improve morale. "I cannot imagine working hard all year to improve not only myself but the school and at the end I receive nothing, not even a simple praise for my effort[s]," he stated. Despite the lack of incentive within the principal evaluation, principals whose "schools receive a high score" by the bi-annual inspection program are eligible for promotion consideration. Majed noted:

> Principals whose school performance receives a high score in Irtiqa inspection are more likely to be nominated for a newly established position, which is similar in many ways to the cluster manager position. ADEC has already chosen some for interviewing and for training. Basically, they [principals] will have to do the work of cluster manager in addition to leading their own schools.

Punitive measures absent. When questioned about consequences, Majed expressed his disapproval for the current principal evaluation system that was subjectively driven rather than objectively sound. He felt that by embedding consequences into the principal evaluation system, "attrition rates would increase," "the morality of principals would be

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impacted," and "experienced teachers would be less likely to pursue administrator positions." These, he felt, outweighed the small potential to hold principals accountable. Finally, he added: "Unless the evaluation is accurate and objective, no single high-stakes decision should be made."

In summary, the major findings derived from Majed's interview are as follows:

- Shortfalls found in the evaluation system and gaps in cluster managers' quality inhibit achieving of the purposes of principal evaluation;

- The evaluation criteria adequately reflect professional standards in representing all aspects of the principal's work;

- The behavioral summaries defined in the evaluation criteria are not clear enough to guide school principals toward excellent performance;

- The evaluation criteria are universal, implemented for all school cycles without considering different variables;

- Some evaluation criteria are much harder to achieve because of very restricted centralization;

- Although it is mandatory, principal portfolio is not given reasonable attention from cluster managers;

- More weight is given to negative learning experiences than positive ones in the overall formative evaluation;

- Professional development activities are not carefully planned nor directly addressed the needs of principals;

- Cluster managers are not involved in the goal-setting process with their principals;

- The summative evaluation meeting cannot be held without an external cluster manager to ensure all protocols and procedures are followed in the final meeting. Furthermore, the summative evaluation cannot proceed until the target principal completes a self-evaluation;

- The ratings given to the principal performance in the rubric were sometimes negotiable and other times non-negotiable—dependent on the cluster manager in charge of evaluating;

- The overall summative evaluation is extremely subjective and has been approached differently by individual cluster managers; and

- No incentives or consequences are directly tied to the evaluation process.

The following case focuses on Ali, a middle school principal. Ali has worked as a school principal for 26 years and experienced the evaluation system for 8 years.

Case Five: Ali, Middle School Principal (Cycle II)

Evaluation Components

Clear understanding of roles and responsibilities necessary. Al-Ain District's ultimate purpose of principal evaluation, as Ali perceived, was "to measure principal performance against criteria identified in the rubric," whereby evaluation results aided principals in capturing a "comprehensive picture of their performance" and helped their assigned "cluster managers determine best support strategies for consultation" within the schools. However, defining boundaries and expectations of working relations between principals and cluster managers was key to a successful supervision and evaluation experience. Ali explained:

If the nature of the roles of supervision and evaluation have been discussed and

agreed upon from the beginning of the process, there… [will be] …be no conflicts

or surprises. I think it is important we reveal our cards from the first meeting, so

we are clear; but if we cannot agree, then we split and select a different partner for

both of us.

When both parties clearly understood their roles, with no "concealed agendas" distorting

the way or preventing them from achieving the evaluation purpose, there was open

communication which leads to growth.

Inconsistencies in understanding criteria and expectations. Ali reported that the

evaluation resembled all professional standards, capturing the core leadership work of

principals from "leading strategically," to "leading teaching and learning," "leading

people," "leading the organization," and "leading the community." He admired the

selection of 18 criteria or elements that were embedded within the 5 total standards of the

job content, yet despite his admiration, Ali noted that the statements written in "the

behavioral summaries were unclear and confusing and created tensions during the

summative evaluation meeting." His experiences were notable:

Sometimes, I face problems with the secondary cluster manager who comes at the

summative evaluation, that he or she might have different interpretations and

understanding of criteria requirements than my primary cluster manager. You

could feel the tension in the air!

When lack of conformity and interpretation exists between cluster managers, principals

may be able to achieve expectations stated in each criterion with the primary cluster

manager, but not with the secondary manager who is only involved in the final evaluation

meeting. Ali explained, "I have seen clashes and confusions among cluster [managers] themselves in deciding what this criterion was meant for and what kind of efforts [were] needed to fulfil the particular level of performance for [a] particular criterion or element." Ali elaborated that interpretations varied, causing confusion for him, and by extension, for his fellow principals. "I phoned some friends [(principals)] and had conversations about criteria and expectations. Everyone would tell a different story," he stated.

It is apparent from Ali's experience, that there must be clarity of purpose, clear definition and interpretation of criteria, and common understanding between all cluster managers to ensure consistent dissemination of information to principals through workshops or meeting seminars. This opportunity will allow principals "time and opportunity" to rewire their belief systems, build "solid foundations," and "relieve anxiety" during the process as they strive to achieve higher performance in the sixth-scale level that starts from "pre-foundation" and ends with "exemplary." Moreover, creating a common language around the evaluation criteria is a powerful step in the principals' quest "to achieve expectations and requirements" —with no confusion clouding the process for both the principals and cluster managers.

Another concern Ali addressed was that the evaluation criterion did not provide the necessary resources or time for school principals to meet the highest-level performance for some criteria. This concern is evident when reviewing the standard "leading people" under criterion "continuous learning." Ali said, "We have to travel and attend international conferences," where they aim to apply effectively proven findings and good practices and while the idea was captivating, it necessitated an excessive amount of effort and resources to be accomplished. In addition to the time and financial

commitment, principals require permission, and Ali explained that the district often

declined the requests. He explained the futility of the situation:

> I really want to attend international conferences to learn from others and increase
>
> my knowledge and skills about the leadership field. But, I cannot go even if I
>
> found a temporary replacement for my absences and afforded time and money for
>
> traveling and registering expenses. ADEC would say no. So, what is the point of
>
> putting this expectation when you don't provide resources needed to fulfill it?

Ali pointed out that when ADEC creates the evaluation rubric from scratch, they "should

identify exactly what they want their school leaders to achieve." In addition, ADEC

should provide necessary and appropriate resources such as "technology, budget, and

time," as well as everything required for the successful achievement of those established

criteria.

The universality of the evaluation criteria for all principals is an ongoing critical

issue that needs addressing. Ali explained, "We are subjected to similar criteria for

evaluation" with no consideration regarding critical variables, including the school cycle

level, geographical location of the school (remote versus urban), student size, or

diversity. If designing specific individual rubrics aimed to address different needs of

schools is impossible, then evaluators should be "sensible and flexible" as they evaluate

school leaders. Flexibility is needed for specific conditions because principals cannot

apply cookie-cutter responses to every situation.

Inconsistent portfolio evaluation. From Ali's perspective, the principal was the

chief tasked with oversight of the portfolio collection process that included ensuring the

portfolio includes all necessary materials highlighting professional standards collected

through the school faculty. A strong sense of support among administrative teams and heads of department manifests during creation of the school portfolio. Ali expressed, "We [(administrators)] communicate with department heads to gather items and samples from teachers to build the portfolio. We all periodically review and assess every single entry and evidence, so we have a complete folder of the school." He emphasized the portfolio collection process was started and planned "from day one."

Regardless of the efforts made collecting, reviewing, and assessing the portfolio, Ali clarified that the tangible evidence gathered "is not as important as communicating and explaining these evidences" to cluster managers during the summative evaluation. The evaluators look for convincing explanations. Sometimes they would say, "Show us the student data and tell us what it says," "show us the school plan and tell us how you achieved your school goals," or "show us the PD plan and explain to us on what basis you selected these activities for you teachers." The cluster manager was not convinced the evidence displayed in the portfolio, but by the presentation and convincing explanations. Weak explanations and communication negates the effort of solid collected evidence.

Ali experienced that the "cluster managers failed to adhere to systematic and verifiable procedures" to check evidence entered into the principals' portfolios and were "satisfied with verbal responses." In other words, as Ali summarized, "It [was] a random practice and differed from one cluster [manager] to another. Sometimes they never requested us to present evidence the entire session…and were satisfied with asking questions." Ali believed that "there should be a systematic way in place to check principals' key work compiled in the professional portfolio."

The Cluster Managers

Cluster manager as consultant. Ali reported that since the inception of the principal evaluation he has worked with three cluster managers. He summarized the supervisory role of cluster managers in one word: "consultant." Their role was to continually model and use their expertise to elicit successful leadership thinking and practice from principals. They were also tasked with management duties which included handling administrative issues, informing principal of updated rules and policies, and reporting ineffective teachers and parent complaints to ADEC. This secondary role was dependent on the amount of involvement the principal solicited. Ali explained:

> Cluster managers are mainly responsible for the principal…only [the]
> principal…they have nothing to do with teachers, students, or parents. That is my
> work. Their job description clearly states they are supposed to 'supervise,' but not
> necessarily meaning visiting classrooms or walking around the school to interfere
> with my job. [However,] I might ask for advice on these things.

Ali interpreted the meaning of "supervision" as providing expert tips while serving in a leadership consultant role and was explicit in expressing that certain activities were precluded from the array of activities the cluster manager should expect to include in the evaluation process. Ali stressed that cluster managers were not entitled to visit teacher classrooms, talk to faculty about their instructional practices, discuss matters with students or parents, or more importantly use these activities in their supervisory role. He further clarified that supervision must be conducted through conversations and dialogues, entirely disengaged from observation which is outside the scope of the cluster manager's roles and responsibilities.

Ali found the intrusion of other cluster managers into the professional lives of his fellow principals exasperating. He emphasized his frustration and expressed his belief in their limited power: "They don't have the authority to dig through my school work. This is my job, and if they are concerned about my work quality, they can ask me, and I will bring data and talk." Ali's self-preservation and assertive nature sets the tone for the formal process of supervision and evaluation. He specified, "As I said before, the work and relationship conditions are discussed and clarified from the first meeting. If we both agree on them, we continue, but if not, we depart. That is what I always do and will do."

Formative Evaluation

Cluster manages impact supervision. Ali perceived the evaluation process as formative with the goal of supporting principals when he said, "I cannot agree more that the evaluation is formative, and that it intends to continually sharpen the leadership and management skills of principals through the power of conversation." However, he continued, "The quality of the evaluation is largely reliant on the experience of individual cluster managers." Over eight years with three cluster managers, Ali concluded the attributes of the process can range from "helpful," "informative," and "positive" to "unworthy," "quarreled," and "negative."

Attempting to learn from past negative experience and to avoid potential ramifications, Ali reported that he began assessing any newly assigned cluster managers to determine whether to continue working with them during the evaluation process. In their first meeting, he explained how the type of supervisory support he needed should be conducted, with supervisory preference being through "conversations" where various leadership topics and issues could be initiated and discussed. The purpose of setting

ground rules is to reach agreement on how supervision will be managed and maintained according to principal's needs. Ali emphasized, "Your cluster manager functions for you in the evaluation, so let's make sure we prepare them to our best advantage."

When asked why not let the cluster manager observe him during instructional leadership activities, Ali repeatedly answered with no pause, "This is not their job and even if possible, I don't need it." He elaborated:

> They must follow the roles as described by ADEC in their job description, but they can ask me about student achievement, professional development, teacher evaluation, parent complaints, etc. We can have a deep discussion about anything they want in respect to my work. Despite their limited authority on how they supervise, I think I don't need to be observed even if it is permissible because I am experienced.

Cluster managers must understand that "principals are not impaired and are professionally seasoned and competent." Therefore, they should respect their decisions as to "how they want to get supervision done." Their agreed role as consultant was beneficial to Ali who used the presence of cluster managers to lend support on issues and problems faced by his school. When his cluster managers provided a strong and relevant suggestion on a particular issue, Ali would follow it to find resolve. However, Ali clarified his position and stated, "If I disagree with the cluster manager even if he insisted, my decision is what comes at the end of the day. I am the principal, the responsible party, and I know exactly my school's needs."

Collaborative supervisory approach. A collaborative supervisory approach is utilized throughout the formative process according to Ali, who stressed the need for

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professional courtesy and respect. This means two educators exchange their ideas, information, thoughts, opinions, and knowledge at the same level—offering mutual understanding between the supervisor and supervisee. Ali revealed a strong resentment of the cluster manager implementing an invasive directive approach that entailed giving instruction, cautioning that this approach does not suit his level and expertise but could be of help for novice principals. "Once they start giving me instruction and orders, I immediately ask them to leave," he commented.

Ali tends to see the directive approach to supervising as being like a fatal arrow; when carelessly chosen and aimed, it can destroy the supervisory relationship. Cluster managers need to value the supervised principal as a person of worth and respect their professional experience. Supervision cannot function properly without matching the supervisory approach and style from the beginning. "The first meeting is important and that is why I am clear with my cluster managers at the outset," Ali repeated.

Ineffective feedback. Over eight years and three cluster managers, Ali experienced no feedback was given in the evaluation, but rather comments and suggestions on the process. He illustrated with an example where a cluster manager responded to a review of his teachers' professional development program with comments such as "good" or suggestions like "add this instructional activity and it will be perfect." Ali concluded that his leadership skills have not grown this past eight years.

Superficial professional development. Ali perceived the monthly professional development activities implemented in the Al-Ain district as "very broad, boring, repetitive, and above all, unstructured"—although such "might be helpful for novice principals". During these activities, principals of the same cycle were divided into groups

with a designated leader introducing successful leadership practices and receiving questions from participating principals. Ali mentioned that the professional development sessions revolved around one recurrent theme, "sharing best practices," and involved group level discussion. The inability to address individual needs or to provide enriched content with concrete evidence was manifested in the professional development. Ali shared:

> There is nothing remarkable in these PDs. You come as an audience and listen to the descriptive accounts of principals about their practices they think successful. The content does not address our school needs. I remember attending several sessions in a row where principals shared experiences about their schools. I felt my presence was a waste of time because my school was just fine and did not struggle in those areas presented.

Successful professional development must be customized to principals' needs and factor in where principals are in relation to their knowledge and skills. Ali stated how sharing best practices was a priority in these PDs but failed to convince principals due to the lack of supporting evidence. He elaborated:

> But frankly, you might feel impressed with some incredible practices discussed, and when you do ask them how these practices work well in their schools, the principals did not know themselves! They say it just worked. No clear evidence was provided, and therefore, meaningless.

Ali's statement shows how he felt principals were trapped in professional development that was unplanned and informational only. It seemed challenging to find activities that really resonated with principals of different experiences even though there were "many

strategies available to collect their input" and draw "passion and interest" that "would have them jumping out of their seats." When in doubt with principals, Ali affirmed, "Choose activities that speak to their real professional lives" —which cluster managers can "survey and witness" when working with their principals. By using weekly visitation and discussions on a myriad of topics and challenges pertaining to the school building, cluster managers can collect data for professional development that is better "suited to principal groups of the same cycle."

In addition, principals benefit most as active participants in the learning process of professional development when they are actively involved in its planning. "We were told years ago to list our interests and growth areas for creating PDs, but our input was just flying on the air," Ali expressed. He further indicated while cluster managers had the resources to create a sustained and focused professional development, they chose to focus rather on sharing best practices. The current shared-practice professional development only conjured images of "unguided activities" where principals stumbled along with "no clear goals, no focus, and no structure."

Professional goals ignored. ADEC mandates that principals set three to five formal goals with deadlines. Although Ali did not mind the goal-setting process, he suggested it was a cooperative effort that involved the active participation of the cluster manager as evaluator in the evaluation process. Only one cluster manager cared to read and review his goals, though this caring vanished later in the process. Ali said, "In the fall, my cluster manager checked my goals for the upcoming year, and after he read them, gave a critique and explained how to write a goal with real meat to it and how to better

develop a goal matched to my experience." Not all principals are confident when it comes to deciding on setting goals—some need a little assistance.

Summative Evaluation

Rituals of summative evaluation. The final meeting was the summative evaluation where two cluster managers met to discuss principal performance for that year. Ali commented, "We were evaluated against criteria or elements that address our professional leadership standards." He continued, "My cluster managers would phone me to schedule the meeting for such an event and later that day would send me an official email to confirm our appointment for the evaluation and inform me about the coming secondary evaluator." While the primary cluster manager was an assigned supervisor who routinely visited and supervised Ali throughout the year, the secondary cluster manager was an external evaluator assigned only to offer unbiased input to the evaluation and provide judgment on performance and achievement throughout the school year.

Unauthentic, deceptive discussion. Ali emphasized that the final meeting required principals to fill out an evaluation rubric and discuss their self-evaluation in conjunction with the cluster managers' initial evaluation. The discussion was deliberately put in place to let principals defend their ratings, disagree with cluster managers' initial rating, explain their stance, communicate any concerns, and ask questions. Similarly, cluster managers had the opportunity to ask questions, request clarification, seek more in-depth information, and examine evidence from the portfolio when necessary. However, Ali felt this discussion, while obviously deceptive, was one way to make principals happy that they engaged, discussed, and communicated their concerns although decisions were already made. He elaborated:

Cluster managers use my self-evaluation and their initial evaluation to make

comparisons. If I agree with their rating on a criterion, then that is perfect. If I

disagree, we will have a debate and both cluster managers will ask questions and

you can see their disapproval on their faces. From their unstopping questions, it

sounds like their goal is to prove they are right and that I deserve what they

thought I deserve. It is highly unlikely they change their ratings in the initial

evaluation even if I provide solid explanation and present effective evidence.

Ali noted that the summative evaluation was "unauthentic" and that cluster managers

were too "subjective," allowing their opinions and beliefs to influence the final

evaluation. What was thought to be real growth for one cluster manager was not

necessarily looked at in the same way by another cluster manager, and Ali explained that

every cluster manager had different perspectives regarding "evaluation expectations,

criteria, and even the growth that…[he] had made."

After the discussion was completed, the two cluster managers met alone to

finalize their ratings across different criteria and determine the final score for the overall

evaluation. Ali never thought to challenge their decision because he believed it would not

affect anything that was linked to his profession, so "why badger over nothing."

Nonetheless, he said, "I know 100% it does not accurately measure my performance."

Feedback absent. The results from the summative evaluation was reported in the

main evaluation rubric. A signature page was attached for all participants to sign that the

procedure of evaluation was followed as ADEC instructed. Ali said one can readily

surmise that non-given feedback does not help in the actual mechanics of understanding

current performance and providing principals needed guidance for future improvement:

The feedback we receive is the evaluation rubric with boxes checked off across criteria. It is not enough for comprehension. Principals must be shown tangible examples or perhaps told how to proceed to the next performance level to completely grasp what they should do.

Therefore, Ali noted that with feedback embedded in the final evaluation, principals "will take the steps to set clear goals that define a future professional path, uniquely theirs." While feedback is important, the lack of continuity with cluster managers is disconcerting. Moreover, he expressed that when assigned clusters managers were only with him for one to two years, there was little opportunity to develop a strong working relationship.

Ali found it unsettling and confusing to get a new cluster manager each year for no rational reason. In addition, and perhaps more critically, Ali found it mystifying when they seemed "fit to our preferred way of working," and therefore, suggested that supervision should last more than two years to develop a kind of open and trusting relationship.

Incentives and Consequences

Incentives absent. No incentive is applied to the evaluation. Ali suggested that an objective evaluation system with embedded rewards or incentives is essential for encouraging principals with high performance. "If we base incentive on this subjective evaluation, then principals will rightly complain that the cluster managers are biased in one way or another," he argued. If the evaluation was not workable in this way, ADEC might consider awarding those principals with high student achievement. However, later in the interview, Ali realized that even if student achievement was improving, the current

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system could not determine if the principal's leadership behaviors were underlying cause. Unintended results and chaos would ultimately ensue.

Punitive measures anchored to objective mechanisms necessary. Likewise, attaching serious consequences to low-performing principals is another issue that requires "objective mechanisms" to ensure fairness. Ali recalled incidents of several Emirate principals with poor performance who were dismissed. He explained:

I heard several principals were forced to leave their positions as principals because they failed to change their problematic school, although they were given more than enough time to do so. But I am not sure which determines the decision of dismissing those failing principals, this annual principal evaluation or school inspection that happens every two years. But even with this dismissing, they [(principals)] still get benefits…They receive their full pay because it is hard to terminate an Emirate for good. And since ADEC cannot fire its principals because they are protected, it is better to send them home instead of subjecting their schools to a worsening condition.

From the passage, it is clear that the law provides protection against high-stake decisions such as termination. To ensure negative influences are minimized in affected schools, ADEC removes low-performing principals from the buildings by sending them home on full pay as a last resort.

During our discussion Ali realized that the evaluation system is complex and that seeking objective judgment and fairness requires a sound evaluation system capable of detecting accurate performance to help in awarding those who exhibit excellent performance and punish those who show no improvement in a reasonable period.

In summary, the major findings derived from Ali's interview are as follows:

- Defining the roles of principals and cluster managers in the supervisory and evaluative setting are key factors for achieving the evaluation purpose;

- Professional standards for principals are mostly expressed in the evaluation criteria;

- The statements written in the behavioral summaries of criteria are not clearly defined, making them open to different interpretations;

- Evaluation criteria are universal for all principals with no consideration given to different variables, including the school cycle level, geographic location, and student size;

- The portfolio is considered a tool that helps in the summative evaluation discussion;

- The main supervisory roles of the cluster manager are giving leadership consultancy and providing expert suggestions;

- The evaluation process is more formative with the goal of supporting principals through the power of conversation;

- Principals can have a strong voice in how supervision functions in the evaluation process;

- No real feedback is given in the formative evaluation, but rather comments and suggestions;

- The professional development activities implemented in the Al-Ain school district are perceived as very broad, boring, repetitive, unstructured, and disconnected to principal needs;

- Most cluster managers are not engaged in setting and monitoring professional goals of principals;

- The way cluster managers conduct the summative evaluation is unauthentic and, more importantly, too subjective because their opinions and beliefs influence the final decision;

- Not providing feedback at the end of the summative evaluation to guide principals is a shortfall at the end of the evaluation process; and

- While no incentives are directly attached to the principal evaluation system, the consequences of dismissing principals are not definitely determined by either the principal evaluation or school inspection.

The following case focuses on Sultan, a high school principal. Sultan has worked as a school principal for 14 years and experienced the evaluation system for 8 years.

Case Six: Sultan, High School Principal (Cycle III)

Evaluation Components

Evaluation purpose varies between cluster managers. When asked about the purpose of evaluation, Sultan answered, "To help school administrators identify their greatest areas of weakness in their practice [and] to provide them with the type of support they need [to achieve] highest expectations." He added that this purpose was not always achievable because each assigned cluster manager approached the evaluation process differently which ultimately influenced the process: "Some do it with formative focus, while others with summative." For Sultan, the evaluation prosses was invariably determined by the individual cluster manager's effectiveness.

While the cluster manager's effectiveness affects the evaluation process, its success is, therefore, determined by the "the quality of the cluster manager behind principal learning growth, behind support, behind diligence, behind fairness, and behind trust." Sultan expressed that some years the quality of cluster managers was "horrible" and far outweighed the few years he witnessed extraordinarily high performance he rated "ten out of ten. "Eloquence" he concluded "is the cluster manager…it is this individual who makes evaluation result in success, and who can carry robustness into the process."

ADEC will reap larger harvests from evaluations "if they invest in highly qualified cluster managers" whose primary concern is to ensure "the continual cultivation of the instructional leadership capacity of school leaders." However, greater emphasis has been placed on the role of cluster managers in the evaluation process because "the cluster manager is the impulse of improvement which needs to be awakened and channeled into principals."

Inconsistent criteria interpretations and expectations. Sultan reported that his evaluation rubrics reflected "the broad professional standards" of principals. Such broad scope created confusion and frustration for principals, with several critical faults which, if addressed, would improve the process. Sultan expressed that the lack of a single, clear, and valid interpretation for each criterion and its behavioral summaries prevented principals from understanding expectations and fashioning their behaviors after what they were expected to perform. Rather than wait an indefinite number of years for ADEC to intervene and solve the problem, Sultan confronted this situation and took precautionary measures from the beginning of the evaluation process intent on understanding the rubric and avoiding any possible clashes at the summative evaluation. Sultan explained:

I have been confused with the rubric, and more with collecting the right evidence

for each criterion. Every time I get a new cluster manager, he or she gives me a

different interpretation than the former one, which makes the evidence collection

process difficult. Then I came to realize that the only way to solve this

misunderstanding, and before tensions happen in the summative evaluation, is to

discuss this matter with the cluster manager. So, I sit down with the cluster

manager and have a long conversation about the rubric, about each criterion, and

about each type of evidence needed.

Sultan's conscious effort to discuss the evaluation rubric and its components early with

his cluster managers was to increase his understanding of required expectations and

ensure the evidence fit the rubric. He became more aware of his practices relative to the

rubric's behavioral summaries and performance levels he aspired to reach. Finally,

principal-initiated dialogues helped Sultan and his cluster managers maintain mutual

understanding and agreement ensuring no surprises on final evaluation day.

Impractical criteria. Second, some criteria were not applicable or achievable.

Sultan provided instances where it was impossible to accomplish an exemplary

performance level for some criteria. He clarified that principals could succeed in

achieving the first five levels of the rubric, particularly "pre-foundation," "foundation,"

"emerging," "established," and "accomplished." However, the "exemplary performance"

level seemed unrealistic and beyond attainment because of its unachievable standards.

Sultan conveyed an example of one element of "distributed leadership," which was under

the standard "leading people" where "exemplary performance" was impractical as shown

in Figure 4.4. He elucidated:

Check the behavioral summaries of all performance levels for this element

[(distributed leadership)]. They are all acceptable and workable except for the

exemplary level. To reach this level, you must be identified by ADEC to

undertake leadership roles within national or international reform. Oh, come on! I

feel this kind of action is designed for superintendents! I remember one cluster

[manager] laughing when reading it.

Figure 4.4 illustrates Sultan's point above.

		Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	☐
Conflict Management	Development of strategies to acknowledge or respond to conflict among employees is required.	The existence of conflict is acknowledged but intervention is left at the employee level with limited invlovement of the school leader.	And... Conflict is acknowledged by the school leader and a resolution process is provided for employees to implement, with support of the school leader. This process has been clearly communicated to staff and community at the beginning of the school year.	And... Conflict is acknowledged by a school leader and they are taking a leading role in conflict resolution process.	And... Uses conflict and resistance as a means to assist staff to investigate new ways of working that better meets organizational goals.	And... Conflict resolutions process is not only supported by staff but shared and implemented in other schools. Coaching workshops on conflict management are offered and delivered by the senior leadership team inside and outside the school.
	☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	☐
Distributed Leadership	Manages most responsibilities him/herself. Distributes some low-level tasks or responsibilities to others.	Occasionally obtains input related to school management, curriculum and instruction from various school community groups (teachers, parents, caregivers & students).	And... Delegates appropriate tasks and responsibility to competent staff members. Checks on progress, and provides support. Provides leadership development activities for key staff members.	And... Identifies and enables highly competent staff to take on leadership responsibilities. Regularly involves parents/caregivers, the community, and staff members in decisions about school management, curriculum and	And... Provides autonomy and support for key staff to make decisions. Creates opportunities for staff to assume leadership and decision-making roles.	And... Is identified by ADEC to undertake leadership roles within the national reform, or on the international stage.

Figure 4.4. Demonstration of Behavioral Summaries

Third, Sultan expressed dissatisfaction over "ADEC's centralized system" that

prevented principals from financing, hiring, and firing, thus making some criteria

impossible to meet and restricting their ability to make major decisions in response to

current demands and existing challenges. "I cannot make all teachers exemplary in their

profession. I deal with people of different personalities and attitudes. I cannot force them

all to excel in their classrooms if they don't have the desire and motivation." Sultan

further argued, "ADEC wants us to improve teaching and learning while leaving us

cuffed to centralization. I am not asking for complete decentralization, but reasonable

leeway would suffice to achieve what they want us to achieve."

ADEC should bestow autonomy to principals, with commensurate accountability

to ensure efficiency and responsible behavior leading to desired performance. As a result,

teachers might also be concerned with accountability and become more serious about improving their instructional practices and increasing their students' learning. Nevertheless, Sultan mentioned later in the interview the complexity of embedding accountability into the system, a topic that required "comprehensive analysis and study" to fit the uniqueness of the context.

Portfolio rarely used. When shifting the discussion to the portfolio domain, Sultan stated, "The portfolio was a valuable resource to keep cumulative records, not only for principals' learning and growth, but also for schools during a particular academic year." He further explained, "ADEC puts the onus on us to create a comprehensive portfolio organized by leadership standards to demonstrate proof of learning growth." The portfolio included a myriad of artifacts and samples from "student classroom activities, professional development efforts, teacher evaluation results, current projects, faculty-meeting agendas, data analysis on student achievement, and much more."

The portfolio was not "a solo practice" undertaken by the school principal but a collective effort of administrators and teachers. This tangible evidence "must be assembled and ready by the summative evaluation meeting" in case "the cluster manager requests verification." Because many principals fake their way through process with deceptively slick portfolios, Sultan believed there's been "a shift in practice" from cluster managers always checking portfolios to only occasionally requesting them.

The Cluster Managers

Ill-defined roles and responsibilities. Working with five cluster managers, Sultan described their roles as "ill-defined, ambiguous, and internally inconsistent." He noted that "each cluster manager is responsible for a group of principals of a similar cycle [and]

they have common and broad duties and responsibilities." Some of these responsibilities included checking into school on a weekly basis, ensuring the implementation of ADEC's policies, providing necessary support, and evaluating school administrators annually. Sultan further clarified his earlier statements regarding roles being ambiguous and inconsistent:

> Cluster managers were given general roles without clear written details and specifications to direct them in their supervisory responsibilities. Their self-constructed meanings of these roles and efficacy led them to different directions, approaches, and behaviors. So, it is not enough to tell them to supervise or improve school principals and then expect their success in arriving at your broad goal destination. There must be a clear route map for them.

His observations and experiences led him to request ADEC act with a sense of urgency to reposition the role of the cluster manager as a supervisor with professional standards to focus more on "leadership needs and the learning of all principals." Once cluster managers are introduced to the core functions of their roles and work, ongoing professional development must take place to sharpen their supervisory and evaluative skills. "Many do have potential," Sultan admitted, "they are just rough gemstones that will shine with a little polishing.

Formative Evaluation

    Cluster manager dependent. Reflecting on the evaluation process, Sultan believed it was "more formative than summative" because the whole idea of the evaluation process was "to target struggling principals, identify their weak points, and improve them rather than weeding them out." He illustrated that the evaluation was dynamic, flowing in

a cyclical process, with feedback collected during and at the end of the evaluation. It is "not a one-time event" but an ongoing process where improvement continues after the final meeting. He elaborated:

> Supervising principals is not a static, one-time event! It is a continuous effort that keeps going in a cycle without ending. Feedback we gained from cluster managers in the process may be helpful for reshaping performances, building new practices, or perhaps altering existing practices. Meanwhile, the summative evaluation is considered not only as an official checkpoint to determine our performances against the evaluation rubric, but also as a threshold with a continuation to move our performance to the next level for the year after.

Despite his certainty, beliefs, and expectations about the evaluation process, Sultan was clear in his view that cluster managers were key factors in determining the direction of the evaluation process. Reflecting on his experience, Sultan stated, "I saw three cluster managers viewing the evaluation as summative and another two viewing it as formative." Therefore, the evaluation structure is individual cluster manager dependent because the current system provides each one autonomy to introduce his, or her, own agenda as to what it encompasses, what activities should be conducted, and what supervisory services should be used.

Supervisory characteristics. Since working with five cluster managers for different lengths of time, Sultan experienced three types of cluster managers as they enacted supervision. He labeled them as "abandoning," "micromanaging," and "rigorous." When Sultan discussed the "abandoning" type, he reflected on his first female cluster manager who abandoned the formative evaluation and rarely showed up the entire

year. "There is nothing to talk about this cluster manager because she was not there, she abandoned me and her responsibilities," he said. Another particularly upsetting moment Sultan recalled with this cluster manager was her bold appearance at the summative evaluation to be the primary evaluator of his evaluation performance despite her virtual abandonment.

In comparison, the "micromanaging" cluster managers were described as the worst type experienced by Sultan. He narrated instances of how they approached supervision: "They had spoon-fed principals with everything as if they were the know-it-all or superior polymaths." The challenge posed to Sultan for the first time as a principal was "[How] to tolerate their presence and get them loosened up and treat him like an equal-footing partner in the process, not as their subordinate in the military." It was difficult to be around someone so obsessed with control, hovering over his every move. Sultan continued:

> It is really frustrating to have supervisors who constantly check on your work in a negative way. Every time they come, they will point fingers at things and say, 'This is not right, it should be this way!' They will feed you with instructions about how to do things even if you don't ask them. It feels like you are devalued and not entrusted or empowered! Collaboration is not their friendly approach.

Micromanaging and controlling supervisors halt empowerment and collaboration. Instead of being passersby in the formative evaluation, "principals ought to be esteemed participants in the process, stimulated to take initiative and risks because successful leadership requires risk-taking." Another hurdle Sultan endured when working with micromanaging supervisors was suppressing his leadership weaknesses from their

presence so as not to be penalized at the final evaluation. He mentioned that these cluster

managers used his mistakes in the formative evaluation as indicators of weakness and

accordingly rated him down in many related criteria. Sultan shared the following

example:

> I recalled an incident in which a former cluster manager noticed that one of my
>
> teachers applied traditional methods in teaching. After observing the teacher and
>
> making sure he followed twenty-first century approaches and methods, I was able
>
> to give some reassurance to the cluster manager. He was pleased by this. I told
>
> him that he could even observe this teacher himself if he wanted to. But, you
>
> know, I was really upset later on when he used this whole story as a weakness in
>
> my evaluation performance. Gladly, I got a better cluster manager the year after.

Sultan believed that creating an environment as a formative feedback mechanism was

more "powerful for learning growth" and "healthier" supervisor-principal relationships.

From his stance, if the cluster manager explained to principals from the onset that the aim

of the formative process was feedback toward specific goals linked to leadership

enhancement, then principals would be more open to learning from their mistakes. In

fact, this kind of supervisory tactic is provided by the "rigorous" cluster managers.

Content being paired with such rigorous cluster managers, Sultan admired their

supervisory approaches throughout the process. These cluster managers used a

"collaborative approach" with equal sharing and discussing, shifting to a non-directive

approach with limited support thus allowing principals to problem-solve and strategize

for themselves. More importantly, the formative environment allowed principals to

reflect on their practices, skill sets, and knowledge, thereby helping them "envision what

to do, explore, and create." Sultan believed that the noble purpose of these cluster managers was to become "self-directed learners" who knew how "to handle themselves effectively in a variety of situations."

Authentic versus negative feedback. When discussing feedback delivered in the formative evaluation, Sultan related that the most authentic feedback that encouraged growth and reflection came from the "rigorous" cluster managers who were actively engaged in his learning development process. He described feedback given by other cluster managers as "simple comments" or "negative feedback" that created distance between the principal and cluster managers and lacked substance for learning growth. For both individual and team benefit, Sultan suggested that cluster managers realize the worth of using feedback as a guiding tool in supporting leadership development.

Superficial professional development. In reflecting on his professional development, Sultan perceived it as "a waste of time and potential" because it did not deliberately focus on ADEC's objective to equip principals with instructional leadership skills. Presented as a series of seminars, this sort of professional development fundamentally "depends on principals' experiences of best practices and rarely provides practical examples" that support meaningful improvement with lasting effects. Sultan shared his experience:

> It looks like the purpose of these PDs is to engage principals in sharing best practices of their own through the exchange of ideas. But I feel this is not sufficient. It is not structured to suit ADEC's goals and our needs. PDs demand more than telling stories about best practices.

To produce "greater efficacy, commitment, and satisfaction," professional development must be built into personalized learning by tailoring the content delivery to "the individual needs and skills of principals." It should be a vital tool as they fulfill their professional goals and improve upon their weaknesses as identified in the final evaluation results. Additionally, Sultan clarified, "Many principals have common weaknesses that can be infused into PD activities. For example, analyzing and understanding school data in a deeper sense, mastering 21st-century teaching skills, and showing technological skills." He further noted that many group principals were lacking in these and other critical areas.

   Professional goals ignored. Reflecting on his cluster managers' engagement in goal-setting process, Sultan noted that only one of his five cluster managers engaged and monitored professional goals. He stated, "Out of five, only one cluster manager kept bugging about professional goals, and I remember having meaningful conversations on how I was working on them." His experience of setting learning goals with that cluster manager, who closely monitored his progress toward achieving these goals by the end of the year, was significant and ensured a successful academic year. "I felt more accountable and responsible to meeting these goals," he added. Usually, his goal selection criteria were more in sync with his evaluation results of the previous year, unless there was a critical policy change or a new reform that required his full attention.

Summative Evaluation

   Rituals of summative evaluation. The point at which the formative evaluation ended was the start of the summative evaluation. In this final meeting, the primary and secondary cluster managers met with the principal for two hours in May "to evaluate

progress and performance." The overall performance of the principal, Sultan explained, was vetted through 5 leadership standards and 18 elements or criteria outlined in the evaluation rubric. These criteria were used as filters to determine the degree to which "principals match, exceed, or fall below expectations."

Sultan's account indicated that while primary cluster managers in the summative evaluation should be the supportive backup for the principal, his experience fell short with only two of his five cluster managers engaged and able to provide meaningful input. He further stressed the importance of the primary cluster managers being "highly visible during the formative evaluation process in order to support their principals in the summative evaluation." Sultan stated, "They should have been my ally if I screwed explaining or missing a valid point, but sadly only two ever supported me in this way."

Sultan's conclusion is based on many encounters as he experienced several summative evaluations with different evaluators. While the primary cluster manager has worked with the principal and is his, or her, advocate, the secondary cluster manager is an eyewitness to the summative evaluation procedure and takes the lead in asking questions as Sultan shared:

> The summative evaluation includes my assigned primary cluster manager and secondary cluster [manager], who I don't know about and who I have never met or contacted before. I am told he is a secondary cluster manager and his or her involvement is a must in the process for the evaluation to be officially accepted by ADEC. In fact, the secondary [cluster manager] takes the lead in discussions and has a weighty voice in the evaluation.

Most of the time, cluster managers discuss and plan in great detail for the final evaluation. This includes deciding on a meeting time, who the secondary cluster manager will be, and preparing the self-evaluation.

Mandatory self-assessment. Following ongoing frustration expressed by principals over the lack of using self-evaluation in the earlier years of the evaluation implementation, ADEC mandated that all principals self-evaluate themselves through a rubric similar to that used by cluster managers at the summative meeting. Two weeks prior to the final meeting, Sultan was provided the instrument to evaluate himself and prepare for discussion during the summative evaluation meeting. The primary reason for the self-evaluation was to provide principals with an opportunity "to reflect upon their practices" and "defend their work" during the summative meeting.

Sultan explained the self-evaluation in the summative meeting "keeps the discussion structured" with greater focus and intensity. Principals were given adequate time for input and to explain their reasoning for what they deserved on the evaluation rubric—more specifically, to defend their self-evaluation when it was higher than how their cluster managers rated them. Sultan elaborated, "Sometimes I felt I received what I deserved. Sometimes, no! Usually, secondary cluster managers involved in the meeting made the discussion hell, although my primary cluster [managers] occasionally provided support to back up my stated points."

Secondary cluster managers detrimental. While the role of the secondary cluster manager is to observe and ensure all ADEC requirements are met, Sultan expressed that the role often becomes blurred and secondary cluster managers thwart the growth process of principals during this final evaluation step. He expressed this while relating why he

thought some of his evaluation performance ratings were unfair—especially on the part

of the secondary cluster managers who made deliberate efforts to lower his performance

by asking endless questions and not being satisfied by given responses and evidences. He

said, "The toughness comes from the secondary cluster managers, and I think they don't

want to see a principal score higher than their assigned principals so that I am at the same

level as theirs." Sultan narrated an example illustrating how his rating had been revised to

a lower level despite solid evidence and a convinced primary cluster manager:

> My primary cluster manager was compelled by my performance at certain criteria
>
> and rated me high, but the secondary cluster [manager] believed otherwise and
>
> kept spinning on this rating as if his purpose was to get me down no matter what.
>
> The evidence I brought was convincing for my primary cluster [manager] but not
>
> for the secondary. Eventually, they revised the rating score to a lower level.

Sultan's statement exemplified how significant a role and how substantial a voice the

secondary cluster manager has in the summative evaluation.

Feedback absent. Sultan described the final decision and feedback given him as

follows: "[It did] not respond to what we needed and [was] not a guide for future

improvement." What Sultan mostly heard from his cluster managers was to carefully

review the "checked boxes" on the evaluation rubric and utilize them as a guide for next

steps. Therefore, he argued that much more emphasis on feedback was necessary as a

supplementary component to effectively preventing principals from rambling, assuming,

and deviating their thoughts from what was required and expected. However, Sultan

recounted only one example in which a cluster manager provided "detailed" and

"constructive" feedback. Sultan said:

She [the primary cluster manager] scheduled a meeting after the summative evaluation. In the meeting, we walked through the rubric and ratings again…took time talking about what I would have done wrong...how I would have done things differently. The session was great, helpful…it made me reflect on things, realize things, [and] feel comfortable. It helped clarify how to focus my intentions and how to move up to the next level—to select goals and the right actions to do so. Above all, I found it helpful when the same cluster [manager] continued supervising the next year so we stuck to the same agenda without worrying about starting over.

Sultan underlined that when cluster managers provide feedback and guidance concerning the current performance and future improvement of principals, they are less likely to be misled by unclear behavioral summaries and are more likely prepared to formulate new intentions, set appropriate professional goals, and take relevant actions. Furthermore, even though cluster managers assume their messages are clear, additional feedback is essential to ensure understanding and to solidify information. Sultan provided a strong view of feedback as an avenue of performance improvement and the only reliable path in a "broken evaluation system."

Incentives and Consequences

Incentives absent. High-achieving principals have no incentives or rewards for exemplary performance on their annual evaluations. Sultan noted, "I did not hear principals were rewarded for their performance. Principals who showed excellent performance were not given a reward." However, those principals who struggled to manage their schools were provided appropriate support. It was worth noting that if a

principal continued to struggle in managing and leading a school, then ADEC established a committee of high-performing principals designated to support him/her—as was the case that occurred the previous year with one principal in a remote school. Sultan elaborated:

> We were selected to give support on different issues that were problematic for the school principal who was not able to deal with his school…as in formulating internal polices and regulations… leading, teaching, learning, [and handling] uncontrolled student misbehaviors. This principal was new to the position and needed help. It goes without saying that his evaluation was down because of the chaotic situation his school faced. But now, it is getting much better.

Punitive measures absent. In the interview, there was no mention of applying consequences in case principals failed to meet expected outcomes or improve over time. Sultan favored establishing a system that recognized high-achieving performers and punish low achievers, but only with a fair and objective system. He indicated that "rewarding and punishing principals" based on their performance with the "broken evaluation system" would only "engage biases and yield counterproductive actions." In general, the current evaluation system appears subjective, even deformed, and therefore warrants "urgent repair." This repair should start with delineating evaluation criteria, formulating defined roles and professional development for cluster managers, and providing monitoring systems to ensure integrity and fairness are not compromised.

In summary, the major findings derived from Sultan's interview are as follows:

- Fulfillment of the evaluation purpose is dependent on how cluster managers approach the evaluation process;

- The evaluation criteria and professional standards established for principals are well-aligned;

- Many defects such as the lack of clear interpretation, lack of applicability, and lack of decentralization that prevent principals from achieving desired performance, are inherent in the evaluation criteria;

- The principal portfolio is rarely reviewed and examined by cluster managers at the summative evaluation;

- The broad roles of cluster managers are distilled into checking in school weekly or monthly, ensuring the implementation of ADEC's policies, providing the necessary support, and evaluating school administrators;

- The evaluation process is perceived as a formative process, not a static or one-time event. It is a cyclical effort that continues even after the final evaluation at the end of the academic school year;

- The types of cluster managers involved during the formative evaluation process are either absent, micromanaging, or rigorous;

- Constructive feedback is rarely delivered in the formative evaluation, and mostly by a few cluster managers referred to as rigorous. The majority give either short comments that cannot enhance learning, or negative feedback that creates barriers and tensions estranging the principal from the cluster manager;

- Professional development sessions are presented in a series of seminars that depend on sharing the best practices of principals;

- The principal evaluation does not guide professional development activities for principals;

- Out of five cluster managers, one is engaged in the goal-setting process and provide constant monitoring toward achieving those goals by the end of the year;

- The primary cluster manager can provide support and assistance for the principal at the summative evaluation, especially when the principal has missed or not explained well a certain point in the discussion with the secondary cluster manager;

- In addition to serving as an eyewitness to the summative evaluation procedure, the secondary cluster manager takes the lead of the summative discussion and asking questions;

- Self-evaluation is an integral part of the summative evaluation, and therefore, principals are mandated to self-evaluate themselves prior to the final meeting;

- The principal feels the secondary cluster manager tries by all means necessary to rate down his evaluation performance by asking endless questions even when given compelling responses and evidence;

- The principal evaluation is perceived as driven by subjective opinions;

- Most cluster managers suggest the principal review the checked boxes and use the written behavioral summaries as feedback of their level and a guide to formulate future goals for improvement; and

- The principal evaluation does not reward nor punish principals for their performance.

The following case centers around Jennifer, currently a cluster manager assigned to Elementary school principals. Jennifer has worked as a cluster manager for three years and conducted supervision and evaluation for nearly all of that time.

Case Seven: Jennifer, Cluster Manager Assigned to Elementary Schools (Cycle I)

Evaluation Components

Achievement requires commitment. Jennifer perceived the purpose of evaluation as "providing feedback to help principals grow in their skill sets." Given the absence of consequences to the principal evaluation, she felt the urgency to use it as a tool for "ongoing dialogues and conversations;" an opportunity to "refine the current leadership practices." Above all, she expressed her difficulty as a supervisor and evaluator when the principals' evaluation performance outcome "did not affect their professional status in any way." However, despite the circumstances, her mission was "to get the best out of" her assigned principals. Jennifer explained:

> The tool itself is summative, but how I utilize it is formative because if I rate principals and score them very low, I am not getting anything out of them. And with their protected profession, they will be the principals of their schools, and…I need to get the best human resource out of that.

As Jennifer revealed, the current evaluation process makes "our supervisory roles far more complicated than they need to be." The system gradually "erodes energy and commitment" while not bringing expected benefits in return. Jennifer indicated that the further irony is that the "goodness" of the supervision piece embedded in the evaluation "gets squandered." In more specific, the supervisory efforts became a wasted learning

opportunity that was nearly worthless when neither the supervisor nor supervisee showed genuine interest in the evaluation process.

Ironically both parties find themselves stuck in a negative comfort zone, blocking their motivation and willingness to reach their potential, completely drowned in the abyss of carelessness. While cluster managers may consider their principals' needs, the latter often fails to take the evaluation seriously and reciprocates inappropriately due to their "securely indispensable, protected status" resulting in decreased performance.

In effect, many cluster managers "are subject to carelessness and negligence" while exposed to similarly infected principals. Jennifer emphasized, "A one-sided supervisory relationship can be challenging for cluster managers who cannot have much control [or] work in a system that is already off-balance." She further cautioned, "It would come as no surprise that cluster managers themselves would…become less invested in the supervisory relationship…after hopeless attempts [at building the same]." The intent of the evaluation becomes unachievable under this dynamic.

Criteria aligned with professional standards. While reflecting on the evaluation criteria, Jennifer clarified, "It was created by ADEC through a committee. But it [has] changed a few times according to ADEC's report." The newly modified evaluation criteria were readable and understandable, offered better articulated descriptions of behavioral summaries than before, and removed unnecessary and redundant information. In addition, the final version of the evaluation tool was made of 18 criteria derived from 5 professional standards for principals. These addressed instructional leadership and management aspects ranging from "curriculum, professional development, and teaching effectiveness" to "school building, student achievement, and the school community."

Clarification of criteria critical. At the beginning of the academic year in September, Jennifer convened with each of the principals under her cycle to communicate expectations, set goals, clarify criteria, and respond to any questions to remove confusion. Furthermore, Jennifer mentioned that principals "had access to evaluation criteria in the ADEC portal" and had the right to ask any questions or seek clarification "before it was too late, before there was nothing [she] could do to help."

Prior to meeting, Jennifer prepared specific questions for each principal to be fully aware of evaluation criteria as well as their planning for meeting and exceeding expectations. Although the criteria and behavioral summaries stated in the scale were generally clear, how principals approached them differed depending on their situation, resources, and budgets. Therefore, Jennifer attempted to provide individualized suggestions to assist them in comprehending the behavioral summaries and finding approaches aligned to their unique situation. She recounted an example where two principals were evaluated at the same level of performance—"emerging" —within the same criterion—"curriculum" —but required different approaches. Jennifer said:

> I had two principals who were [at] the same level [of] performance—'emerging'––and wanted to reach the following level, which is, I think, 'established.' So, each principal gave me different ways and solutions to what they thought would lead them to their targeted level. They consulted me and had my opinion. The first urban primary school principal had more resources, so it was easy…to find a perfect program; whereas the second needed some time to figure out an acceptable approach on how to meet that criterion, given her limited resources and expertise.

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Jennifer's point is that the initial meeting helps clarify the various steps in approaching criteria and helps avoid conflict at the summative evaluation meeting. "I tried to clarify for all principals from the beginning that I was there for them…ask if you don't understand anything or need assistance," she remarked.

Additionally, Jennifer provided a high level of accessibility to her principals being "available by phone, text message, email, in-person, or whatever accommodated their circumstances." Therefore, in her "dictionary, there was no excuse for not reaching [her]." It is noteworthy that not every cluster manager followed the same steps as Jennifer as everyone "has his or her own agenda" in supervising and evaluating principals.

Student component absent. Another aspect highlighted in the evaluation criteria was the absence of emphasis on student achievement. Jennifer indicated that the evaluation was not largely tied to "student achievement," which was apparently weighted less than it should have been. Student learning must be the "center" and "core of evaluation to teachers and principals." She explained further:

> I am very comfortable with principals being evaluated based on school data and student success. As a cluster manager here, I have very limited authority to change that. Even if I had the authority, it would be hard to do so because I don't think I could tie [in] to [all of the] data because [the] UAE does not have reliable information. For example, the EMSA is going away this year and there is another test called [the] EMSAT for the next year. With these [changes,] you don't have historical data to provide growth, which results in the loss of the progression piece over time.

Jennifer expressed disappointment that the current evaluation standards and processes did not integrate student achievement data into the evaluation to measure the growth or influence made by principals. One significant reason for this shortcoming was the inability to gain historical and reliable data needed to make fully informed decisions. ADEC recently announced that next year a new test, EMSAT, would replace the current standardized test—known as the EMSA (abbreviated for English, Mathematics, Science and Arabic). The EMSAT is a national system of standardized computer-based tests based on United Arab Emirates national standards. Without a reliable data integration formula and plan in place, these changes will make tracking student progress difficult and ADEC would need years to follow up on student progress and develop reliable data.

Inconsistent and manipulative use of portfolios. Jennifer felt so strongly about the use of the portfolio that she emphasized that its completion helps participants reflect on past performance, deliberately isolating areas for improvement. She continued, "This reflection assists in the formulation of goals that principals need to work on to…produce evidence during the forthcoming year." At the summative evaluation, the cluster manager may ask the principal to produce portfolio evidence to justify any claims of improvement and give corresponding explanations or clarification to ensure full understanding.

Pointedly, principals who had carefully analyzed their portfolios with the assistance of a cluster manager were positioned to have a full and clear understanding of "where they stand" and then establish "goals to pursue next." Portfolios should become a "normal practice, and all principals should develop a portfolio for their school, whether or not it is mandatory." Over the years, Jennifer witnessed principals not making effective use of the portfolio and building it only as mandated to satisfy ADEC

requirements. Other principals put enormous effort into "decorations" and "color pictures." Unfortunately, however, some exaggerated the information in their portfolio so that "it had no reflection of the reality of the school."

Even though a portfolio may be an invitation for malpractice, Jennifer was able to discover if a given set of documented evidence in the portfolio truly represented the work of the school. She could discern this through her "regular visits to the school," "constant observations," and "direct interactions with the principals and school personnel." Thus, portfolio scrutiny by many cluster managers was put aside because of excessive manipulation practices involved in the portfolio process.

The Cluster Managers

Broad roles and responsibilities. Jennifer defined cluster managers as first-line managers whose primary work was "to monitor, supervise, and evaluate school principals." Their work included "reporting and handling management issues" that impacted the function of schools. Jennifer had "nine Cycle I principals" and would meet "with them face-to-face every week for an average of two hours per visit." She highlighted the importance of devising her planned agenda for the first semester to cover chronic and salient topics as she started working with principals. She unfolded her plan as follows:

> For me, I set my own agenda. For example, September was about getting to know my principals and their schools. October, for me, was about going into classrooms in each school and seeing closely the level of education and the level of students. November was more focused on the school improvement plans—What are they targeting? Do we need to tweak it?

Not all cluster managers were as engaged in the principal evaluation and growth process, but the "autonomy" in scheduling and planning provided "greater flexibility" for cluster managers to tailor their plan to fit the schools' needs—a decision made after careful analysis and reviewing the schools' history of evaluation.

It is worth noting that the previous school performance rating is a critical factor in how cluster managers arrange their visits. Jennifer stated, "If all my schools have been rated B, then my visitation would be pretty [much] the same." Jennifer continued, "Other cluster managers that have high and low schools might visit the high performing schools…every other week and focus more on the low schools. It is really flexible and up to the cluster managers."

Regardless of flexibility, the liaison role between schools and ADEC that cluster managers are required to fill interferes with the planning process. Jennifer elaborated:

[There are] a lot of administrative details as a liaison between ADEC and schools. A lot of time is spent on this aspect. For example, at the beginning of the year, they [(schools)] are missing teachers, so I have to deal with it…And I have to go back to ADEC headquarters and push that through the system. This morning, the principal had [an]…issue with the parent of a special needs student. [Now,] I need to go back to headquarters and push that through the system…so a lot of liaison [activity]. You will have to prioritize things and delay your plan.

In addition to the liaison role, Jennifer's time is filled with managerial tasks and administrative issues like parent complaints, teacher and student issues and test preparation that fall more within the scope of the principals' duties. Preparation for school inspections becomes an urgent situation where Jennifer tries to afford more

availability to ensure those schools are fully prepared considering targeted areas the inspectors are investigating. She said, "I have one school that is being inspected, so of course I am going to be in that school more right now. I have three schools this year that are being inspected."

When discussing professional development, Jennifer clarified that there was "no PD specifically designated for cluster managers." Instead of PD, cluster managers "regularly meet together to discuss certain elements" regarding expectations for the principal evaluation process, criteria, professional development, and daily challenges that other colleagues are facing. This provides a way for them to share information, check on the status of schools, hear input from everyone involved, and solve problems. However, Jennifer recommended that ADEC create "ongoing professional development for cluster managers" related to their core roles of "coaching," "mentoring," "supervising," "providing feedback," "asking questions," and "differentiating support."

Ultimately, the role of cluster manager includes supervising, handling administrative oversights, and evaluating principals at the end of the year. Notably, each cluster manager has flexibility in designing his or her own agenda, but most consider the school evaluation as critical to the school's area for focus. Cluster managers tend to provide greater attention to those lower-performing schools. Currently, there is no professional development provided for cluster managers to support the development of their supervision and evaluative work.

Formative Evaluation

Supervision agenda aligned with principal's needs. As mentioned earlier, Jennifer explicitly stated the evaluation process is "more formative because it does not have

consequences, [although] the tool itself is summative." She continued, "It is important for cluster managers to keep focused on improving principal leadership while ensuring various standards and educational goals are achieved." As a cluster manager, Jennifer's supervisory visits are organized and arranged to coincide with the principal's professional standards and general calendar of school duties. She explained:

> With the five standards, I really don't think of them as headings but as a guide for my supervisory roles. Plus, the principals have calendars which are broken up for each month with the types of duties they should be doing. And we…follow up with them all and make sure they are being done. I try to make my supervisory work go in line with theirs.

The planning takes much focus, attention, and concentration, but the payoff is boundless when the work is organized and harmonized with school principals. Jennifer strongly believed that the occasional visit, compounded with unplanned supervision, did nothing but significant harm to the school "key stakeholders"—the principal, teachers, and students. Discussing her supervisory agenda in the formative process, Jennifer stated that she always shared with her principals her highlighted monthly schedule that dictated her focus for each month. Hence, her supervisory visits varied in focus from administrative to instructional areas as covered in principal standards and were readily available for review by her principals prior to each visit. She clarified:

> It is different for me…every month I give them a schedule and then I will point out the highlights that I am going to focus on for the month—so we have different focuses each month. Last month, it was much more on procedure and structure. Do they have their textbooks? Do they have their furniture? Do they have staff?

etc. This month I was focusing on visiting classrooms with them and evaluating

their level of understanding of what was going on inside the

classroom…evaluating their teaching and learning.

Jennifer expressed that heavy administrative responsibilities, apart from new instructional

leadership burdens, had dramatically increased in the UAE schools. ADEC emphasized

the need for principals to be capable of mastering both domains in order to further

improve teacher effectiveness, student learning, and school success. Regardless of her

balanced focus on supervisory visits aligned with professional standards, Jennifer

emphasized engaging in instructional activities. She said, "The only area that I would like

to stress more is student achievement because if the students are not performing, then you

are not doing your job, period."

Instructional leadership-focused supervision. Jennifer believed that "leadership

impacts student learning" when it is pointed at "working relationships" and "improving

instructional practices," which lead to increased "student achievement." Many of her

visits began with a short tour of the school where she critically observed inside and

outside the classrooms. By assessing teaching competency, the classroom environment,

student engagement, the school climate, professional responsibilities, interactions, and

the effectiveness of school teams, etc., Jennifer could better determine how teaching and

learning occurred within these essential variables.

Classroom observation necessary. Jennifer narrated her experience inviting a

principal and vice principals to conduct classroom observations. After all, "both are

tasked with evaluating school faculty throughout the year to make sure the good practices

and skills [were] disseminated to the best effect" and to "ensure maximum benefits." She

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explained, "We had a discussion afterward about the data we collected. I listened to them and let them reflect. I am more [of] a facilitator in the discussion, asking them some questions to help them find the answers by themselves." By teaching principals to be instructional observers who position themselves to balance the focus between teachers and students, Jennifer believed she was ensuring the principals maintained their primary focus on the students. She elucidated with an example:

> A very specific example is that I am working with several of my principals to look not only at what their teachers are doing in the classrooms, but also at what the students are doing. I mean, we are looking at student success because they are very used to the teachers. Teachers should do this and this and this. If the students are not responding, it does not matter at all. Stop and look at the student engagement level. Stop and look at this component instead of wholly focusing on the teacher component.

Before gathering for reflection and discussion, Jennifer reminded her principals, "This is your opportunity to be yourself and feel comfortable in sharing weaknesses and mistakes." She also highlighted the importance of creating a safe and non-threatening environment to stretch and challenge the principals with support and help as needed. Such an environment creates "transparency," provides "emotional support," reveals "weaknesses," and most importantly, increases "trust."

Flexible supervisory approach. Vital to the success of any evaluation process is the supervisory approach employed and the ability of the evaluator to ascertain the appropriate approach for each individual. Jennifer explained, "My approach is more individualized with each principal, depending not only on the expertise, but also on the

language—how well we can communicate." With beginning principals, Jennifer applied a directive approach; with experienced principals who manifested some struggling, she applied a collaborative approach; and with principals of high expertise, she applied a non-directive approach. The language barrier was an extra hurdle in Jennifer's supervisor-supervisee relationships, creating continuous tensions and sometimes misunderstandings, especially when a large gap existed.

The selected supervisory approach, as noted by Jennifer, was sometimes compromised and downgraded by language deficits because "some [principals] did not have enough language to understand the discussion or get what [she] meant." In these situations, Jennifer reverted to being more directive, communicating in simple English that principals could understand. Language barriers can negatively impact the cluster manager's supervisory approaches as well as the learning process in the formative evaluation.

Conversational style feedback approach. To maintain performance, corresponding expertise, and high-level commitment, principals need constructive feedback throughout the evaluation process. Unfortunately, Jennifer felt she did not provide the constant feedback she believed her principals deserve but rather event-specific feedback such as feedback on how they conducted observations for evaluating teaching and learning quality. Apart from this activity, she felt that she engaged her principals in conversation rather than providing effective feedback. She said, "I am constantly working with them, but I don't think the conversations that we have are feedback."

The ability to provide feedback and maintain a strong supervisory alliance and relationship with the supervised principal is a sensitive area for Jennifer. She was cognizant of her supervisory role and had not experienced any of her principals being intimidated by her position and evaluative responsibilities. However, she stated, "Chances are more likely if I let my guard off" because the current evaluation system involves "inspecting," "checking," and "reporting" to ADEC if principals were not compliant with operational policies. She explained:

> For example, I have one new principal who may not know the operational
> methods that align with what ADEC wants. So, I know it has to be done this way.
> If there is a conflict between us, I have the right to…reprimand in a directive way
> or be very clear about what my expectations are. So, I have to be careful in these
> situations.

Although she was entitled to reprimand for erroneous actions, Jennifer was aware of the possible backlash that could occur. As a result, she was rather cautious when approaching principals about their oversights, so as not to jeopardize the already-established supervisory relationship.

Superficial professional development. Jennifer viewed professional development as capturing "best practices and success stories" in particular leadership areas and commented that professional development should provide opportunity for participating principals to adopt, carry out, and internalize those proven practices in their schools. The principals of her cycle meet monthly in smaller groups to share and discuss practices within their schools. Her goal was to address the challenges faced by principals, however she noted PDs are criticized for being "unfocused" and "rarely applicable to the reality of

principals" of the targeted cycle and while "it may be effective for those in need of these areas, but honestly, not all principals are getting benefits."

In most cases, the design of professional development is the responsibility of "cluster managers who see what principals need to learn and select topics accordingly." During the PD, a spokesman from the group of principals may be assigned to share their best practices and stories within their group. The suggested "following-up" to sharing was broken because "not all principals were persuaded in implementing what is said and discussed among groups." Jennifer suggested that professional development be carefully designed to provide continuity between what principals learn and what occurs in their schools to ensure a long-lasting effect on their leadership competence.

Professional goals monitored. In Al-Ain public schools, principals were required to select specific goals pertaining to their areas for growth and are obligated to formulate a detailed action plan with deadlines to meet their selected goals. While discussing action plans, Jennifer explained, "The principal has to complete one, the teacher has to complete one, and the cluster manager has to complete one; so, it is more [of] a personal development plan." She further noted that she spends time reviewing her principals' initial plans, provides suggestions, and makes alterations if necessary.

Throughout the process—from the beginning of establishing goals to the end of the year—Jennifer was largely concerned with the appropriateness of her principals' identified goals. She narrated a story where she provided support on a principal's specific goal:

> If there is any area of growth or [a] professional goal that you know…they want
> to work on, I would definitely work with them on that specific thing. For

example, one principal wants to work on PIPS exam analysis. We have specific

conversations about my experience with that.

The cluster manager's role is crucial to the principal's success and principals should take

advantage of their cluster managers' expertise when they are present. Principals should

be able to request "help, feel support, and seek advice" to achieve their professional

goals. Failure to take full advantage of this opportunity is irresponsible.

Summative Evaluation

Rituals of summative evaluation. The summative evaluation which takes place at

the end of the academic year is a review of principal performance throughout the year.

Elaborating more on the mandatory meeting, Jennifer said cluster managers reviewed

principal's self-evaluation and performance progress toward those objectives set at the

beginning of the year. It is important that cluster managers provide a comfortable

atmosphere for open and honest discussion to "give an equal chance for everyone

[(principals)] to defend their position."

A key task for cluster managers to prepare for the summative evaluation day is to

inform principals of the agenda, events, and people involved. Jennifer articulated:

I first contact principals on the phone to set up the meeting with a following email

to confirm it. I tell them about the procedure and agenda for the meeting. This

step lends structure to the meeting and gives principals an idea on how to

prepare—though I know they might have experienced this already with former

cluster managers. For example, I tell them about the secondary evaluator, about

how things that are going to happen, about completing the self-evaluation. I want

everything clear.

On the day of the summative evaluation, Jennifer followed the same routine for each of her principals. Prior to the meeting, she took a short tour around the principal's school to gather necessary information on the school's progress, leadership teams, faculty, students, resources, and facilities to share with the secondary cluster manager.

Jennifer's efforts provide the secondary cluster manager with a deeper understanding of what takes place within the school. In attempting to provide an unbiased evaluation, ADEC required "an outside perspective from an unbiased expert"—precisely from a secondary cluster manager. Jennifer clarified that the secondary cluster manager asked questions during the meeting and provided input while evaluating the principal. "I, myself, serve as a secondary evaluator for other principals in different school cycles," she commented.

Mandatory self-evaluation. Principals should complete a self-evaluation in preparation for the final evaluation and discussion. This process helped principals make judgments about the adequacy and effectiveness of their own performance throughout the year and allowed cluster managers to compare and contrast principals' self-evaluations with their evaluation of them. Jennifer's discussion with her principals includes several considerations beyond the self-evaluation. She expounded:

> I am not going to take their self-evaluation for granted. This step is almost
> identical to what the principals do when they evaluate their teachers. My
> judgment of them is going to be about student success, their strategic planning,
> school improvement plan, and set of goals. I would also look at the level of their
> teachers because that is a terminal goal. And their job is to improve teaching and

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learning, discuss progress and their involvement in school activities, talk about

teaching and learning, and go over evidence in relation to their evaluation criteria.

Arguably, as Jennifer emphasized, their visibility and accessibility to the principals

throughout the evaluation process is crucial to support the cluster managers' judgment

claims at the summative evaluation meeting. "If you closely work with the principals all

year long and sit down with them at the end of the year, you are going to go back and

look at your notes to what you have done with that principal," stated Jennifer. She

continued, "It is simple because I work with them and I know what skills they are

mastering and skills they are not mastering. You are going to sit down and discuss and

review that with them."

Charting principals' learning and monitoring the curve from day one is important

to ensure a fair evaluation. Jennifer noted that she allowed the principals to defend their

explanations if they disagreed with the evaluation, discussed their thoughts, and shared

their evidence if they desired to do so. Essentially, each side was offered a chance to

communicate concerns, arguments, and evidences before the final evaluation was

determined.

Constructive feedback. Following a lengthy discussion with the principal the two

cluster managers met privately for several minutes to discuss the final evaluation before

informing the principal of their decision. Jennifer was unsure how the final score was

calculated, but she believed that each category within each criterion was weighted, then

an average score was taken across the rubric and generated in the form of an alphabetic

letter (A, B, C, etc.), number (100, 90, 80, etc.), and category (exemplary, accomplished,

proficient, etc.). She elaborated, "I electronically transfer all evaluation reports into

ADEC's system and scores and results are automatically generated. Principals can have access to that."

When approaching the final decision, Jennifer "thinks twice before confronting principals" with the evaluation results. She considered the absence of punitive measures for principals receiving a very low evaluation and the lack of compensatory reward for those receiving a very high evaluation. Her strategy then is to avoid harming the supervisory relationship by not giving high or low ratings. She elaborated on the split camps among cluster managers evaluating principals. Jennifer shared more:

There is a split camp [among cluster managers] in that there are some 'hard-liner' cluster managers who say if you rated them good year after year, you cannot have a hope of really getting rid of them…which is true. And there is another camp that says you cannot get rid of them anyway. So, what is the point? I try to get some sort of combination and try to salvage the situation. I am not going to have them rated very good even if there is no problem. But at the same time, I am not going to rate them low knowing that nothing is going to happen. I want to be able to salvage that relationship to get the best out of them.

In conjunction with the feedback received after revealing the evaluation results, Jennifer usually offered principals a "trustworthy feedback that was based on [her] data…[and]…a rigorous analysis" derived from ongoing observations, interactions, and monitoring of their leadership practices throughout the year. This allowed principals to take specific actions in relation to areas of improvement rather than "leave them with the evaluation rubric's behavioral summaries."

Normally, the principals followed the statements of behavioral summaries marked by their cluster managers in the evaluation rubric. This limited information was sufficient for some principals to construct a plan for the following year while other needed assistance. Jennifer stated, "I ask all principals, without exception, if they want extra time or an additional meeting to discuss in detail their performance and feedback. It is optional." In all cases, Jennifer is "aware of the importance and value of giving feedback and giving recognition for [her] principals when a job is well done."

Incentives and Consequences

Incentives absent. There is no structure imbedded in the principal evaluation process that triggers incentives, awards, or praise as principals manifest great performance. However, Jennifer mentioned that for promotion, "ADEC looked at the Irtiqa reports for the year, and there was an opportunity for the principals to become executive principals, similar to cluster managers." The report is generated by Irtiqa inspectors who evaluate every school in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, every other year. Jennifer noted, "This is a sperate evaluation for schools and different from [the] principal evaluation" and "ADEC should attach at least a partial incentive program directly linked to [principal] evaluation to foster higher motivation and boost performance."

Punitive measures absent. Similarly, no consequences befell the principals who exhibited low performance and scored low on their evaluations. Jennifer stated, "It is very difficult to raise a principal for termination, which is very easy in the US, and you would have a lot of authority." She compared the authority of cluster managers in the US and the UAE when she said:

If I was a cluster manger in the US, I would be given an equal role like a

superintendent. But here, if I had a low principal, I would definitely document,

document, document! And there is a process. When they [(ADEC officials)] ask

for names of principals that you would like to raise for termination, you have to

have a lot of documentation and it is a very severe process.

As noted, terminating principals for low performance is nearly impossible and requires

excessive documentation in the UAE. Although Jennifer encouraged consequences to the

evaluation system "so that principals can take their leadership very seriously," she

warned that "there is…no reliable data you use to support that. It is basically the opinion

of cluster managers." For these reasons, Jennifer favored establishing more accurate

measures with reliable data that can gauge the real growth and performance of school

principals.

In summary, the major findings derived from Jennifer's interview are as follows:

- Achieving the purpose of evaluation—helping principals grow—is hampered by

  the lack of punitive measures whereby principals' professional status is

  protected, effecting the quality of leadership;

- Evaluation criteria are more articulate, readable, and understandable than

  before, with less unnecessary and redundant information;

- The cluster manager sets an initial meeting with principals as an opportunity to

  avoid confusion regarding evaluation criteria;

- The student achievement component represents a minority share of weight in

  the evaluation;

- Many cluster managers tend to skip portfolio examination because of principals' manipulated practices involved in such portfolios;

- The primary roles of cluster managers are supervising, monitoring, reporting, and evaluating school principals;

- The cluster manager has the autonomy to create their own agendas in relation to how they supervise their principals;

- Other secondary roles of cluster managers—such as handling administrative oversight and reporting to ADEC—consume much time and energy, and more importantly, negatively impact the already planned session;

- No professional development is introduced to cluster managers to help them in their supervisory and evaluative responsibilities;

- The cluster manager's supervisory visits are organized to go hand-in-hand with principals' professional standards and general calendar of school's important tasks throughout the year;

- The cluster manager puts more emphasis on improving instructional leadership activities to help principals better observe and evaluate their teachers, which leads to improved teaching and learning;

- The cluster manager is aware of the importance of establishing a safe and non-threating environment when supervising principals;

- The supervisory approaches employed by the cluster manger in the evaluation process are more individualized with each principal, depending on their expertise and skill with the English language;

- Feedback given to principals during the evaluation process is not as constant or as widespread as it should be;

- The cluster manager views professional development as seminars where principals share best practices and success stories intended for participating principals to adopt, carry out, and internalize;

- Professional development is criticized for being unfocused and rarely applied to the daily lives and challenges faced by principals;

- The cluster manager is engaged in the goal-setting process by reviewing professional goals and providing support, suggestions, and modification to help principals in achieving those goals;

- The cluster manager considers several factors when determining the final evaluation results of principals, including self-assessments, previous notes taken throughout the process, evidences collected, and the input of the secondary cluster manager;

- Given the lack of consequences linked to evaluation results, the cluster manager gives neither high nor low ratings when evaluating principals. Rather, they give a balanced rating to salvage the supervisory relationship;

- The principal evaluation is too subjective because it is too influenced by the opinions of cluster managers;

- The cluster manager offers feedback that is based on rigorous analyses originated from ongoing observations, interactions, monitoring, and shadowing that occurs during the year; and

- The principal evaluation does not use the evaluation results to inform personal employment decisions regarding incentives or consequences.

The following case centers around Maria, currently a cluster manager assigned to Middle school principals. Maria has worked as a cluster manager for four years and conducted supervision and evaluation for nearly all of that time.

Case Eight: Maria, Cluster Manager Assigned to Middle Schools (Cycle II)

Evaluation Components

Evaluation purpose. The purpose of evaluation according to Maria is ensuring principals' improvement from one year to the next, where improvement is defined as regularly recorded performance increase witnessed by cluster managers during weekly visits throughout the academic year. The evaluation process is a learning opportunity that assists cluster managers in capturing "the strengths and weaknesses of principals' performance." Maria's perspective on the evaluation purpose can be summed up as follows:

> I prefer to look at the evaluation purpose as an opportunity to have a discussion with principals about where they think they are, where I feel they are, how they want to move forward in terms of professional development, and how I can support them.

Although she feels certain the evaluation process contains both formative and summative aspects, she is unsure of the summative portion's role in high-stakes decisions, where ADEC officials rather than cluster managers are responsible. Nevertheless, Maria is committed to both roles, supervising her assigned principals during the formative period, and later evaluating their individual performances.

Evaluation criteria aligned with professional standards. Maria noted that the evaluation rubric aligns with the principals' duties, capturing the core leadership roles and responsibilities and translating them into behavioral summaries that are distributed on a performance continuum from the very worst to the very best—pre-foundation, foundation, emerging, established, accomplished, and exemplary. These performance levels, or standard categories, each contains an "elements or criteria" subsection.

Universal criteria. Maria noted that the evaluation instrument and leadership focus are not positioned to adequately meet the needs of all principals. While the instrument is the same for everyone, the broad leadership focus does not accommodate the contextual differences prominent in the various school levels. She explained that the current situation tightly couples the cluster manager's flexibility to the principal's evaluation and thus has highlighted the need for rigorous examination of each principal on a case-by-case basis and a more individualized approach to supervision and evaluation.

School environment, available resources, student population, school staff, and budgeting tend to be captured between the vast juxtaposition of rural and urban schools. Without factoring for these differences during evaluations, tensions and unfairness are likely to arise. A flexible cluster manager who considers situational contexts is able to ensure fairness throughout the evaluation cycle.

Subjective interpretation of criteria. The susceptibility of the evaluation criteria to an infinite number of interpretations is a fundamental dilemma that Maria feels creates discord amongst both cluster managers and principals. "It is not an absolute. I might judge a principal as accomplished, and another cluster manager might judge the same

principal as exemplary for the same criterion," she said. The evaluation criteria are not sufficiently detailed and therefore substantial effort is required to articulate all possible evaluative aspects to improve understanding and gain consensus. More subjective employment and baseline mutual agreement can be derived through meetings and workshops among cluster managers and principals that establish common definitions for standards and their criteria. While Maria has tried this in the past, she emphasized the importance of ongoing discussions and open communication to ensure a smooth transition throughout the process.

To ensure she handled arising situations appropriately, Maria invited her own principals to face-to-face meetings to discuss their current performance against evaluation criteria. She tried to unpack ideas and issues, such as "how to get to the 'proficient' level in [a particular] criteria" or "why [principals] still got stuck on [one] level and how to move forward." The cluster manager and principals should engage heavily in evaluation criteria discussions and openly converse about supervision and evaluation expectations. Maria noted how she compared how confused the principals were before, with how confident they were after, these meetings. It was a milestone that helped principals put things into perspective to make appropriate behavioral changes.

Results-focused criteria. Another issue Maria highlighted was the school focused versus principal focused areas of the evaluation criteria. She believed that some criteria were designed with the strength of a principal's leadership ultimately affecting the school's success. She expanded the discussion on the potential negative impact of the evaluation performance on principals as they worked to make improvements, where those improvements were judged by the end-result of school performance regardless of how

much effort was put into it. Maria placed a strong emphasis on the inability of the evaluation rubric to capture the real effort of school principals:

> "[I] may have somebody, which in my opinion has been doing an excellent job trying to move the staff forward (depending on where they have started), and the staff might be at an acceptable level, but not a very good level. And it may have taken absolutely amazing work to get them from being horrendous to acceptable. Sometimes, there are situations where, despite the principal's best efforts, staff are not motivated and don't attempt to get any better. And yet, the principal, according to the rubric, shows as being 'Ok' instead of doing an amazing job moving the staff forward."

The behavioral summaries in the rubric address what happens in the school versus the principal's work. Nonetheless, principals' efforts are not enumerated in any counting effort, despite their tremendous effort but can easily be unintentionally overlooked and misjudged, thereby influencing their motivation and performance in the future.

Portfolio relevance. Maria projected a clear opinion that the various contents of the portfolio were not limited to important evidence in tracking the leadership growth curve of principals, but contained academic, social, and emotional evidence for the entire school. However, such impressions cannot be gained in a community where portfolio practices are exposed to manipulation through altering the facts and inserting distorted versions of the truth. Maria demonstrated her firm stance regarding portfolio practices: "I am not so much a believer of a portfolio anymore, because anybody could compile a binder full of positive documents."

In an effort to avoid being played and fooled by a superficial portfolio, Maria

tended to regularly monitor teaching and learning at her schools from the beginning of

the year. She maximized the usefulness of her weekly visits to have a deeper

understanding and a clear picture of teaching quality, learning gains, student discipline,

and internal policies composed to boost the overall quality of school performance. Maria

provided examples of methods she used to ensure consistency between portfolio

documentation and reality, noting the following:

> So, if the school is showing they are being very weak, and every student is getting
>
> an A+, you become suspicious. Besides, when you go on walk-throughs with the
>
> principals and you see many weak teachers …then the principal presents their
>
> evaluation data that everybody is 'exemplary', you would say 'that is not what I
>
> am seeing in the classroom.'

Maria's response demonstrated that paying frequent visits to the school, accompanied by

intentional supervisory practices, helps cluster managers capture the real functioning of

the school compared to portfolio documentation.

The Cluster Managers

Roles and responsibilities. The primary responsibility of cluster managers, Maria

explained, is to monitor and supervise principals to become more effective leaders of

their schools. They are also responsible for year-end principal evaluations and ensuring

proper communication at all levels between schools and ADEC. Although committed to

supervising and evaluating her assigned ten principals, Maria noted that she also serves as

a non-biased evaluator in other cluster managers' schools.

Evaluation and mentoring do not end with the principal but extend to assisting and evaluating principals evaluating vice principals. Maria shared that cluster managers are present when principals discuss evaluations with their vice principals to ensure agreement is reached on the evaluation. Because Maria was called to 40 different locations to evaluate 40 different people during evaluation season, her weekly visits were impacted. "I try, normally, to get to school once a week, but it is less frequently during the evaluation season," she recounted.

When asked about the training and professional development provided for cluster managers, Maria paused for a few seconds and responded, "No such thing happens, at least in my time as a cluster manager working here in Al-Ain." However, what was particularly charming about supervising there, Maria noted, was that the cluster managers were fortunate enough to structure "the kind of supervision needed" for each individual principal without restrictions. This was done in order to establish a learning environment essential for each principal development session and required specific skills, knowledge, attitudes, and qualities be brought to the process. Thus, both professional and personal development were warranted.

Maria added that ADEC only brought "people from different divisions to speak at set meetings to enlighten us about changes in curriculum, assessments, and ADEC's polices." However lacking enlightenment on professional development, cluster managers firmly adhered to their "job description" as a guide for supervisory work, while observing past experience and self-learning to actively explore and discover knowledge that aligned with the current practices for effectiveness. Maria concluded that cluster mangers

building themselves into top-notch leaders varied from one supervisor to another, requiring enormous attention and mobilization of personal effort.

Even with commitment and motivation, cluster managers require nourishing professional development to achieve quality supervision and evaluation. In fact, Maria stated, "Well-developed and structured PDs will enable us to maintain competence, become aware of current trends and practices, and assist in providing quality services." Maria concluded that without sustained PDs, cluster managers risked stagnation if nourished only by prior experience and reliance on their professional practices.

Formative Evaluation

Formative process valued. Maria perceived that the principal evaluation was primarily formative with ADEC officials ultimately determining the summative results. To provide a "meaningful and sustainable formative environment," Maria emphasized the instructional side of the formative evaluation which elevated the teaching quality and student learning in schools. She noted that growth included improving instruction and the quality of student learning by providing purposeful professional learning opportunities for teachers, selecting appropriate professional goals that harmonized with schools' most prioritized needs, and learning how to deliver constructive feedback aimed at improving instruction. Thus, Maria's principals improved their instructional leadership during the formative process through creatively engineered learning environments.

Autonomy privileges granted by ADEC were useful in constructing the individualized supervision needed for each principal. "We have a greater degree of autonomy in decision-making regarding constructing supervision in the formative process," Maria stated. She continued, "At the same time, there is no obligation for

supervisors to make common decisions. It is not a goal to fully comply with supervisory structures." Maria affirmed that every mentor could, and should, create a differentiated supervisory structure relative to their principals' needs, especially when their learning goals and needs demonstrate significant differences.

During the construction of supervisory agendas, Maria engaged her principals in sharing their desired leadership focus. Through consistent collaboration she sought to increase receptivity, promote motivation, and make them feel "they [were an] important part of [the] evaluation process…it [was] actually for them." The input of principals in the supervisory process planning was an indispensable prerequisite for delving into the formative process, she explained. "I always ask them…in regular visits, 'Do you have issues you want to discuss?' There was always an opportunity for the principals to talk to me about whatever was on their mind."

As supervisory structures are put into place, regular visits are critical. "Cluster managers and principals need to meet regularly, face-to-face, to achieve supervisory goals discussed in the first meeting," Maria noted. A hallmark success to achieving optimal supervision is the incorporation of multiple data sources that further illuminate the areas of strength and growth. She detailed her supervisory activities during visits:

I do regular school visits and enter classrooms…I also notice how principals observe and give feedback. I look through teacher evaluations to review overall performance compared to my classroom visits. I also talk to other members of the schools to see whether they are upscaled or not. Every time I am talking them through in the school visits, I basically monitor them and observe them, whether they are making progress, whether they are understanding certain things.

Maria has an expansive view of the cluster managers' role observing and supervising principals. She sees them as active cameras, capturing consistent images of leadership skills to eventually provide a complete picture; and as mirrors, reflecting back on their principals through feedback that enhances and modifies their practices.

Supervisory approaches. Maria considered several elements when choosing the supervisory approach she used with her principals: the personalities, abilities, and receptiveness. She narrated her way of customizing her tailored supervisory approach to fit each principal's needs:

It is not necessarily a result of their experience level, it is more their personality and ability level. My approach depends on the person, such as where they are at and how receptive they are to coaching. For instance, some principals are very sensitive and you have to approach them in different ways. Others, you have to be fairly blunt because they don't get hints, so you have to be directive in your approach.

Too often, Maria attempted to avoid the directive approach because it fueled dependency and led to less self-direction and exploration. With the supervisory time dedicated to each principal, Maria eagerly moved principals toward a non-directive approach. However, regardless of her aversion to the directive approach, she pointed out that in urgent situations that required a quick decision the directive approach was the only option. She explained that the use of reflective questioning was not the best course of action in problem schools. "Sometimes, you have to say [something] quickly to save the situation and help that principal in need…you have to say, 'I will suggest you do da, da, da, and da,'" she stressed.

In her encounters with many principals of different levels and personalities, Maria supervised those who felt the need for guidance and those who felt able to operate independently. Nevertheless, even with independent principals, Maria deliberately allowed them to experience failure, how their over-confidence made them unreceptive to advice. She addressed letting them fail when she said:

> If I cannot get them to understand why their next move is incorrect with my advice…sometimes, I have to let them follow that path, an experience of failure for them to understand…because if I say you must do it this way, then they will still be thinking I was wrong, that it would be better if we had done it this way. Sometimes, you have to let them learn from their mistakes.

Maria reiterated that principals' characteristics and the urgency of the situation are major determiners of selected supervisory approaches.

Information-delivery based professional development. When discussing professional development provided for school principals, Maria admitted that no PDs are embedded in the process. "I would like to go back three years when there was still a Tamkeen program, where there was regular, true professional development," she reported. The current monthly meetings are, for the most part, information delivery sessions that update principals on current policies and reforms to ensure proper implementation in schools. Maria elaborated:

> PDs are [mostly] meetings that deliver information, like updates. For example, 'Here is the new behavior policy, the new assessment, or the new health safety. You have to make sure this and this happen in the school.' So, there are no PDs linked to [the] evaluation process.

These meetings also allow time for principals to share areas of concern where assistance is needed. Often topics such as grouping, improving science, refining the school improvement plan, understanding data analysis, and sharing best practices are addressed. "We identified some schools that had good practices and some that needed [better] practices. We also gave the opportunity for schools to say, 'we are proud of this and we would like to share with others,'" Maria mentioned.

Through information and best-practice sharing at professional development sessions, principals are exposed to the work of colleagues who exhibit outstanding leadership within their schools. Maria frequently advises her principals to explore other schools that exhibit effectiveness in areas in which they are lacking or have the most need. "I will tell the principal that [he or she] should visit [a particular] school and see their science program…and take the teachers too…so I have done a lot of that," she said. By encouraging observation in higher performing schools, the message was far more powerful and principals had a deeper understanding of the intricacies of effective processes, and they generally left inspired for growth and change. However, Maria believed these meetings were "no more no less" than information delivery.

Professional goals monitored. Through perseverance and determination, success and professional goals are attainable. Maria met with her principals at the onset of each semester to identify areas for improvement, pathways to improvement, and to review progress to date. From there, a rigorous examination of performance and data was used to develop goals that aligned with the principals' needs and schools' top priorities. Under some circumstances, Maria requested that principals who "were successful finishing [them] last year" amend their goals and she invited them to "master something new."

If Maria noticed principals not focusing or putting the effort for improvement, she asked those principals to challenge themselves for success through increased effort. "I don't know if you are yet pushing yourself enough. It is very easy for you to get here in a couple of months, you should make more effort," she remarked. In her experience with goal planning focused meetings, Maria noticed that some principals were very strong, were cognizant of their needs, and only required confirmation and a few suggestions. Others, however, were unsure of themselves in their role and needed more time, guidance, and support to get them on their feet.

Summative Evaluation

Ritual of summative evaluation. In conducting summative evaluations, cluster managers use the information gathered throughout the year to evaluate each individual principal and assign a summative grade. Maria elaborated that these grades were based on multiple data sources and performance demonstrations that were observed and recorded during the academic year to provide a fuller and more accurate picture of performance. "I combine all the data sources I [have] gathered for principals and analyze them to form a complete picture of their individual performance," she added. Solid cluster managers pursue the mission of recording only facts and reliable information to further increase objectivity in the evaluation, instead of exclusively relying on subjective viewpoints.

Per ADEC guidelines, a second cluster manager is required to ensure the final meeting procedures correspond to ADEC's requirements and to provide an unbiased viewpoint to the summative evaluation. The secondary cluster manager's role is invaluable to the meeting's success as they navigate disagreements between the primary

cluster manager and the principal by checking portfolios, asking questions, and addressing overlooked matters during the summative discussion.

Prior to the final meeting, Maria always informed her principals about the involvement of the second cluster manager and discussed the final meeting agenda. "Generally, I would call the principal and talk about the day of evaluation, mention the other cluster manager involved and things we might be doing like having a tour around the school before the meeting," she stated. It is imperative that cluster managers are explicit about planning, objectives and key activities for the final visit to ensure principals are aware of the structure and prepare accordingly.

Self-evaluation discussion. As Maria prepared her principals for the final evaluation she asked them to complete ADEC's mandated self-assessment using a self-evaluation form similar to the formal evaluation rubric they had worked with over the years. During the meeting, the cluster mangers showed highlights, visited classrooms, and discussed the principal's self-evaluation. When the cluster manager and principal's view of the self-evaluation were relatively compatible, the summative evaluation process was as short as a half hour. However, when results differed and there was strong disagreement, it often took two to three hours to complete the evaluation. Maria expounded on scenarios where opinions between the cluster managers and principal were divided:

> In the case of disagreements with the principal, then you are certainly free to explain why you think it should be something different. If there has been something that a cluster manager had either forgot about, or was unaware of, a

cluster manager might change his mind or say, 'we feel that we have not seen

what you are talking about.'

Deep, open discussion around the self-evaluation provides opportunity for principals and

cluster managers to clarify their points and express their thoughts. From her experience,

Maria noticed that principals who identified their own mistakes were more likely to get

serious and motivated to correct them. She noted that it was all about ownership. "If I tell

my mistakes, I will own them and it is more likely that I will correct them. But if

someone else points out my mistakes, I get defensive and feel I should cling to the old

ways of doing things," she asserted.

Non-negotiable decision. Ultimately, the cluster managers determine the final

non-negotiable decision on performance in the summative evaluation. They confer

privately after the principal leaves the room and discuss any discrepancies or concerns.

After coming to agreement they re-convene with the principal and present their decision,

recording it on the evaluation rubric form. The principal acknowledges receipt of the final

decision by signing the form. Following the meeting, the principal can access ADEC's

website and view all scores across standards and criteria, calculated and assigned into a

number and alphabetical letter in the E-performance system.

In-depth feedback. According to Maria, in-depth feedback was infused into the

overall discussion of the summative evaluation meeting. She noted that while self-

evaluation involves "reflecting on [one's own] experience," feedback involves "two

cluster manages describing what they heard, saw, and thought of one's

performance…and what they would like to see in the future." If principals needed more

time to discuss their performance, Maria scheduled an additional meeting, but it was "rarely requested."

Regardless of the meeting outcome, the real value of the evaluation process is its continuation and sustainability for leadership improvement, improved core teaching, and student learning growth. Maria helped principals use the valuable information received through the summative evaluation to set professional development goals for the following year.

Incentives and Consequences

Incentives absent. There are no incentives directly linked to overall performance on the evaluation. Maria liked the idea of incorporating extrinsic incentives to maintain productivity and high quality work for those principals with an "accomplished" level and above. However, later in the interview, she cautioned that the effects of extrinsic incentives are short term and such a move might increase principals' work enthusiasm and performance momentarily with a drop off leaving the principal and ultimately the school negatively affected by a change in momentum. Moreover, the heavily-rooted subjectivity in the evaluation process does not favor fair scoring, thus making the selection of those who deserve incentives and those who do not challenging.

Incentives and subjectivity are impacted by the cluster managers who work at different paces, possess different passions, and have different commitments to their positions and responsibilities, resulting in different levels of performance quality. Evaluations require careful documentation, multiple observations, rigorous supervision, consistent visits, and quality feedback to render desired improvement. Moreover, such supervisory practices vary from one cluster manager to another, all of whom have

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different personalities and experiences that impact their work. These individual specific traits coupled with ADEC's ongoing changes which creates a system deprived of accumulated, reliable, and valid student data, further highlight the difficulty in introducing an extrinsic rewards based system.

Punitive measures absent. Maria stated that in addition to supervision and evaluation, her job is to provide recommendations about overall principal performance to ADEC officials following the summative evaluation. She has no role in final decisions regarding consequences and noted that consequences attached to the principal evaluation results are unclear. "I heard of some principals who were asked to leave school. I don't know whether that was because [their] school closed or because of low evaluations," she stated. Despite being removed from the school, they continued to receive their full salaries, which Marie noted "was almost a reward." High-stakes consequences must be clear from the beginning of the evaluation to ensure fairness across the system.

In summary, the major findings derived from cluster manager Maria's interview are as follows:

- The purpose of evaluation is to ensure the development of principal performance from one year to the next through a learning process that identifies the principals' strengths and weaknesses, enabling cluster managers to formulate the supervision needed for support;

- The cluster manager is charged with two primary roles: supervising assigned principals during the formative period and later making a shift in role to evaluate their individual performance;

- The evaluation rubric captures the professional standards and leadership of principals;

- The evaluation rubric is largely universal and implemented for all principals;

- The evaluation criteria produce a number of interpretations among cluster managers and principals which creates confusion and misunderstanding. Cluster managers can reduce misunderstanding and conflict over criteria interpretations by scheduling a one-on-one meeting with principals;

- The evaluation criteria are more focused on the schools' performance rather than the leadership efforts of the principals which results in the ignoring of concerted leadership efforts made by individual principals;

- Regardless of how important the portfolio is to schools in the evaluation process, some cluster mangers ignore it when evaluating school principals because of the manipulative practices of some to inflate the truth of school performance;

- The primary responsibilities of cluster managers are to supervise and evaluate school principals. Other responsibilities are to serve as liaisons between ADEC and schools, serve as a second evaluator, and aid other cluster managers in the evaluation;

- Cluster managers have a great deal of autonomy to customize the supervision needed for each individual principal;

- No professional development is provided for cluster managers. Therefore, they firmly adhere to their job description, past experience, and self-learning as a guide for their supervisory work;

- The cluster manager perceives the principal evaluation process as primarily formative, not summative;

- The cluster manager engages principals in the supervisory planning process;

- A key element in crafting optimal supervision is the incorporation of multiple data sources that capture the areas of strength and growth of principals;

- The cluster manager considers several elements when choosing the supervisory approach for principals, such as their personalities, abilities, and receptiveness—to fit the need of their current performance levels;

- There is no real professional development provided for principals. Rather, there are monthly meetings based on delivering information to update principals with current policies and reforms that disseminate best practices and experiences;

- The cluster manager helps principals identify their professional goals and monitor their progress every semester;

- The cluster manager uses various data resources to form a complete picture of individual performance in the summative evaluation;

- The summative evaluation cannot be completed without the presence of a second evaluator who provides an unbiased viewpoint and ensures all procedures are followed according to ADEC standards;

- The discussion that occurs in the summative evaluation centers on the self-evaluation;

- The final decision regarding the evaluation is generated by a collective agreement between the two cluster managers involved and is non-negotiable;

- The cluster manager perceives the discussion around self-evaluation as a

feedback session but does not mind scheduling an extra session if requested by

the principal;

- No incentives are directly linked to overall performance evaluation; and

- High-stakes consequences attached to principal evaluations are not clear.

The following case centers around Benner, currently a cluster manager assigned to high

school principals. Benner has worked as a cluster manager for six years and conducted

supervision and evaluation for nearly all of that time.

Case Nine: Benner, Cluster Manager Assigned to High Schools (Cycle III)

Evaluation Components

Cluster manager as mentor. Benner perceived the main purposes of evaluation as

both monitoring the growth curve of principal effectiveness and providing guidance for

differentiated professional supervision for principals. He noted that the evaluation is

sometimes utilized in emergency situations where the summative piece is important if

"ADEC needed to actually make a high-stakes move." He clarified, "If ADEC has a

situation where a principal needed to be terminated, the principal's summative

evaluations would be reviewed." Cluster managers evaluate and make recommendations

but do not make those decisions. Clearly, this sort of work is in the realm of "ADEC

officials, who review, discuss, and make those decisions."

"Mentoring" and "supervision" are the two primary delineated intents of principal

evaluation that have been in place since the establishment of the principal evaluation

process. Benner claimed that notable progress has been made since its inception. He

articulated:

Let us be fair here. If you look at the evaluative practices and supervisory

processes, they are happening. When I first got here, I said, 'My God!' Many of

my principals were up here, and because mentoring has been going on, you can

see it. I can triangulate that evidence by how the schools have done over a period

of six years since I have been here. It is a tremendous achievement.

While Benner acknowledges that the gradual changes in practice and growth over six

years were visible and tangible, he further recognized that in the United Arab Emirates,

"the field had potential leaders and they were on a different continuum scale of how they

were and how they were growing."

Evaluation criteria aligned with professional standards. The evaluation criteria in

the Al-Ain district align with professional standards and reflect the principals' work and

responsibilities in practice. Thus, cluster managers follow "a set of criteria and indicators

that mirror the work of principals." Similar to the principal's evaluation rubric, cluster

managers use a set of standards with specific elements or criteria attached. Benner

emphasized that "to meet evaluative criteria, principles were required to perform a range

of educational leadership practices with appropriateness and effectiveness in schools."

Such activities, he recalled, included "creating clear vision, monitoring curriculum,

having a school plan, creating differentiated professional development, and bringing the

school community together."

Despite alignment of criteria with the principals' work, Benner discovered that

subjectivity in interpretation, lack of leadership focus, and higher levels of difficulty with

insufficient feasibility led to frustration and confusion amongst principals. These

overarching issues caused discouragement, prevented principals from reaching evaluation achievement, and ultimately reduced the overall quality of the principal evaluation.

Subjective interpretation of criteria. When principals and cluster managers hold different interpretations and understandings of behavioral summaries, the opportunity for miscommunication is apparent and affects the intent of the evaluative process. Benner illustrated an example of the specific criterion, "teaching effectiveness," where a principal had to "observe each teacher per semester and provide quality written and verbal feedback on pedagogical planning assessments." Benner explained: "As a cluster manager, I determine what quality means. So, in general, there is some kind of choice I make within each of these criteria." However, my intended meaning of "quality" may not align with my principals who might interpret the word "quality" differently, depending on their background, training, and previous cluster managers who imparted the knowledge.

In all cases, if there is no intervention aimed at creating mutual understanding on what is prescribed in evaluation criteria, clashes are more likely to occur between cluster managers and their assigned principals. Indeed, it is imperative to initiate a proactive supervisory stance, provide appropriate instruction, and ensure consensus on definitions and expectations to guard against disagreements on common language that pertains to evaluation criteria. In this sense, Benner and his fellow cluster managers made an effort to reach a consensus regarding the general meaning of the criteria. Benner narrated:

> We [cluster mangers] gather at meetings and discuss this, but it does not mean
> that we examine each word of the document. We try to come up with some

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consistent method. And this sort of gathering occurs in an episodic

way…especially when new cluster managers join the work here in Al-Ain.

When asked whether this gathering of cluster managers was effective, Benner promptly

responded, "No, it [was] still subjective" because it dealt with clarifying criteria in more

general ways rather than providing specific explanation. Thus, from his perspective,

consensus amongst the cluster managers was impossible because they barely scratched

the surface of the problem leaving subjectivity to the individual interpretation of each

cluster manager. Such discrepancies ultimately carried through to the subjects of their

evaluation, the principals.

To avoid any confusion and ensure the seamless execution of activities that

aligned with evaluation criteria interpretation, Benner scheduled a purposeful meeting

with principals to deal "proactively," "sensibly," and "positively" with each criterion.

During this meeting, they addressed their conditions with different circumstances

factored in "so that everyone was on the safe side." He reminded his principals that the

criteria assessed their leadership performance competency and this meeting was their

opportunity to discuss the kind of data and evidence needed to support and fulfill each

criterion's defined expectations.

Results-focused criteria. Drawing on statements written in the behavioral

summary of each criterion, Benner felt the need to see it more focused "on the leaders'

actions themselves, as opposed to the results of leaders' actions." Many of the current

evaluation criteria focus too much on the end results. Benner used "the learning

environment criterion" to demonstrate his claim, particularly the "accomplished"

performance level as shown in Figure 4.5.

Element	Pre-Foundation	Foundation	Emerging	Established	Accomplished	Exemplary
	☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	☐
Curriculum.	Has a basic understanding of the ADEC curriculum and standards.	Demonstrates an understanding of current approaches to effective teaching and learning. A system exists in the school to ensure the linking of teaching and learning to ADEC curriculum and standards.	And... Ensures the integration of heritage, culture and ICT into the delivery of the curriculum. Has structures and curriculum in place to meet the needs of SEN and G&T students. Ensures school assessment procedures are valid, reliable and well planned.	And... Establishes structures to ensure teachers critically evaluate and plan their curriculum delivery. Ensures teachers work collaboratively to plan and evaluate the curriculum and ensure it is meeting the needs of all students, including SEN and G&T.	And... Establishes a regular cycle of curriculum review that uses effective interpretation of data to evaluate curriculum effectiveness. Ensures that the school provides a rich and diverse curriculum which incorporates aspects of career and life planning preparing students for the next stages of their lives.	And... Has a well organised, team based curriculum structure, that: • Integrates learning across curriculum areas • Has reliable assessments that inform curriculum and whole school planning • Meets the needs of all students And is regularly reviewed in the context of student achievement and national standards. The school offers on-going, high quality enrichment activities and a choice of sporting and cultural activities for its students.
	☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	☐
Teaching effectiveness	Has some understanding of what constitutes a good lesson and the planning required for this.	Observes each teacher at least once per semester. Provides quality written and verbal feedback on pedagogy, planning and assessment. Provides schedules and structures to ensure individual and collaborative planning, teaching, assessing and evaluating.	And... Demonstrates a thorough understanding of current approaches to effective teaching and learning. Ensures and monitors that teachers regularly assess student learning in accordance with ADEC policy and use this data inform future planning to meet the needs of all students.	And... Provides professional direction to teachers by encouraging innovation in classroom practice and setting of rigorous achievement targets.	And... Builds a vibrant, active collaborative learning culture in the school that is focused on student achievement and professional growth. Students are actively and consistently involved in the learning process and take responsibility for their own learning.	And... Has a rigorous, cyclical program of evaluating teacher effectiveness and linking this to teachers' professional development. Ensures individual and collective responsibility for students learning Uses all forms of data to guide planning for improvement.
	☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	☐
Student achievement	Accepts current levels of student achievement as being satisfactory.	Leads staff to analyse and uses basic data from EMSA, PIPs, CEPA, national exams and continuous assessments to inform improvement in curriculum planning and delivery.	And... A cycle is established for periodically monitoring student achievement against set targets and high standards. Challenges underachievement of staff and students.	And... Celebrations of success and achievement are embedded in the school culture. Encourages student self-assessment as a form of measuring progress and setting targets for improvement.	And... Have clearly defined and high expectations for student learning. Ensures a consistent and continuous focus by all staff on student achievement, using data and benchmarks to monitor all student progress.	And... In collaboration with all staff, uses appropriate data to set rigorous, concrete goals for student achievement and constantly monitors the progress towards those goals. School is able to map student progress against learning/action plans over a number of years.
	☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	Developing ☐ Consolidating ☐	☐
Learning Environment	A list for all students with physical or identified psychological needs has been prepared. Management of student behaviour is based upon the individual responses of staff.	School policies acknowledge access, absenteeism, inclusion and diversity for all students. Effective IEPs are developed, as appropriate, and students' achievement is regularly monitored. The school has a student behaviour	And... Ensures teachers use a variety of approaches to cater for a variety of student learning needs. School policies and procedures ensure a safe and healthy school environment.	And... Student behaviour is successfully and consistently managed according to a well developed and consistently implemented plan. Teachers create a positive learning	And... Classroom physical environments across the school are vibrant and stimulating and support student achievement. All staff are actively involved in the management of all aspects of the learning environment.	And... Manages and organises all aspects of the school environment to ensure it meets the needs of the curriculum, health and safety regulations, and promotes student engagement and achievement, as demonstrated over a number of years.

Figure 4.5. Criteria of Teaching and Learning Standards

As literarily written in figure 4.5., "the student behavior is successfully and consistently managed according to the well-developed and consistently implemented plan." Benner prefers it read "the principal has been directly involved…in creating a successful and well developed behavior plan…and has proven that he/she managed that plan effectively." Similarly the second statement currently reads "Teacher create a positive learning environment that encourages management and achievement" and does not focus on the work of the principal. He argued that he "is not evaluating teachers, but rather the principal" and therefore the statements should be rewritten to indicate the principal's action focused leadership.

Impractical criteria. The third issue Benner addressed was the difficulty and insufficient feasibility of some criteria. During his six years as cluster manager, he has witnessed numerous principals frustrated with the pressure and unable to surpass the fifth

performance scale "accomplished" and reach "exemplary." Benner narrated a frequently repeated example he encountered every year with his principals:

> The rubric clearly says they [Principals] presented a research finding at national and international conferences regarding specific educational topics that have been proven in the school and replicated in other schools. That is a pretty difficult place to be. Okay, I am not sure if I would be there close to it because of the replication. So, when they come back and say I think I am here, my answer will be show me the evidence that you have done this because you have to fit the rubric! To me, this one area I keep flagging every year.

This particular criterion is difficult for Emirate principals and expert supervisors to achieve because it is not a feasible goal for every administrator. Benner suggested that evaluation criteria must be feasible and workable, and more importantly, correspond to the cultural context of the UAE rather than blindly adopting the experiences of other countries that had no essential common grounds.

Portfolio relevance. Reflecting on portfolio practices, Benner explained that when he began his supervisory position he continually monitored portfolios at school visits but quickly relinquished the practice, noting that the limited supervisory visit time was precious and should not be wasted on marginal activities such as monitoring principals' portfolios. "That is what you do outside the school, and I can check it [the portfolio] electronically if necessary," he commented. Benner believes a cluster manager should channel his energy and supervisory efforts into "student achievement and monitoring what is happening in the school."

The portfolio's true value is evident at the summative evaluation. It is a necessary tool to reduce tensions when discrepancies emerge between the principal's self-evaluation and the cluster manager's initial evaluation of them. "I will ask for evidence from the portfolio in that case…although I know for sure if they have it or not," Benner stated. When cluster managers appropriately supervise throughout the year they have sufficient opportunity to evaluate their individual principals on the developmental continuum and provide mentoring and guidance to help them achieve expectations.

The weekly meeting with each of these principals, Benner added, elicited a greater understanding of the scope of their "leadership skills," a strong sense of "growth within their schools," and opportunity to ensure the "principal was moving through the criterion continuum." Thus, he did not ask them to "show a binder" during the visits but empowered them to track their own progress and ensure appropriate documentation was readily available if needed.

The Cluster Managers

Roles and responsibilities. The definition of cluster manager, according to Benner, was "an individual who supervised, mentored, guided, evaluated, advised, mediated, supported, and motivated principals within a particular school level"—with the goal of increasing opportunities "for learning and growth." With genuine commitment, the cluster manager has a strong potential for stimulating learning and expanding growth and development within individual principals, thereby ensuring the principals' individual experiences positively impact their individual schools. The cluster manager is an essential component of the evaluation and key to generating a widespread impact on principal learning.

Benner proudly explained several principal victories under his supervision including how he made a difference in their leadership capacity, made concerted efforts to resolve urgent administrative problems that schools could not handle, and his availability at any time to provide all necessary assistance with commitment and sincerity. His daily routine consisted of returning to the district office to address many issues facing his schools after spending the day with principals. As a cluster manager, Benner dealt with parent complaints, student enrollment, teacher absenteeism, tight budgeting, limited resources, matters of special needs, and other administrative problems. He, like all cluster managers, essentially served as the mediator between the public school and the Abu Dhabi Education Council.

Currently, Benner has 15 principals of cycle III (high school level) and meets with most of them for two hours each on a weekly basis. However, he meets with a few high-performing principals every other week. Given the initial diagnosis and examination of previous evaluations in early meetings, Benner wondered, "Why devote much time to principals who apparently already exceed expectations in leadership skills when there are so many others falling behind who need much attention?" Even so, Benner uses the situation to create an effective network where lower-performing principals benefit from the expertise of higher-performing principals. His autonomy as a cluster manager allows Benner's creative mentoring network and supervisory structure to be effective in the evaluation process. Such autonomy also provides a supervisory structure that is more individualized and differentiated. Benner stated:

> I have a regular schedule that I go to school with. I provide curricula and things
>
> that I will be doing in the school. Basically, everything is planned and structured.

If there is something specifically to differentiate for each of them, I will send an

email. It depends on their needs. I have greater autonomy.

However, despite the individual cluster managers' wide array of competencies, without

ongoing enhancement of knowledge and skills in supervisory practices, cluster managers

can become stagnant in their own learning growth. ADEC might hire a dozen cluster

managers to supervise and evaluate principals assuming that all do splendid work with

many considerations "about principals' best interests and learning in the evaluation

process targeted…and that is not necessarily happening if our own learning is limited to

our past experiences."

Benner noted that within Al-Ain district there is a diverse body of supervisors

coming from "different countries, cultures, and experiences," and all shaped by different

educational systems. While this could be beneficial, it also leads to variations and gap-

performances in supervision and evaluation. To close that gap, professional development

is needed. Benner explained that professional development is an important bridge in the

learning opportunity and that just as principals receive ongoing professional development

to better lead their schools, cluster managers should also receive ongoing professional

development to better supervise those principals in better leading their schools.

Formative Evaluation

Formative versus summative evaluation components. "The evaluation is formative

until May, and then it becomes summative," Benner remarked. One of the key differences

of function for evaluations is the distinction between formative and summative

evaluations. Benner offered a metaphor to draw this distinctive feature between the two:

"When the chef tastes a dish, it is formative; but when it comes to guests tasting it, it is

then summative." He then further explained that the formative process is regarded as part of a change process that provides valuable information for principals to identify their strengths and weaknesses and mold and reshape their performance to improve as they move forward and reach the summative checkpoint.

In contrast, when the question is "How well did the principal work or perform throughout the year? it is a summative evaluation." At this stage, the cluster managers are evaluating the quality, productivity, and performance against certain variables, expectations, and criteria rather than looking at ways to modifying current practices. Benner added, "Even with this summative wrapping up the evaluation process, it is still going to be formative in a way…after report and feedback is provided enabling them to take actions to improve their performance next year." Ultimately, he presumed that the formative and summative evaluation could exist together, but the intents and functions of "formatively looking forward and summatively looking back" were worth keeping separate.

Supervisory activities. When approaching the supervisory process, Benner set three focus goals for his agenda: "to mentor and coach principals to be better instructional leaders," "to provide differentiated professional development to build capacity and leadership," and "to support the school in increasing student achievement." He involves principals as active participants in the agenda-setting process allowing him to carefully prepare for meaningful supervisory sessions, shrewdly make a solid structure, and purposefully raise the level of motivation as principals engaged in a joint supervisory planning process. Benner explained his reasoning:

Things I do with one principal are different from things that I do with another. It is totally based on their needs and interests. It is differentiated… We decide what we do, what we did previously, and what implications we found in the past. We decide what is going to happen next. It is collaborative… They are actually driving the conversation, not me. So, I have been able to take that step into what I know, to review, and prepare for the next visit with a focus.

Additionally, every supervisory visit was planned and chained to the next visit, thus making topic threads more connected, engaged, and seamless, allowing regular follow-up practices to bridge the gap between previous sessions and provide a continuation that constantly focused on learning. For example, Benner focused his supervision with a "walk-through with principals like visiting classrooms while focusing on school improvement, teaching strategies, and guided reading." With ADEC emphasizing the proper implementation of guided reading, Benner and his principals agreed to put some attention exclusively on this aspect for several sessions.

Expounding more on guided reading, Benner joined a walk-through with a principal and invited other administrators to participate in the session with the aim of amplifying the benefits and offsetting the constraints of learning in a pure face-to-face setting. He narrated the process of doing walk-throughs with school administrators:

I will participate in that with the principal and her teams…go and collect data together…come back to it, and then sit down and unpack what we found…And I listen very carefully to what they have done, then let the principal go first. Then there is feedback, such as 'That is exactly what I thought. That is what I saw. Have you considered what was happening in the classroom back at the corner

there about such and such? Did you see that? Did you not see it? What does it mean?' The principal might say she found something I did not see, and so on.

As revealed from the passage, Benner implemented a series of walk-through observations followed by immediate reflective discussions to see how administrators assessed teachers' pedagogical content and instructional strategies. Then, after unpacking data and determining strengths and weakness with the administrative team, Benner let each member choose one area of focus to target for follow-up visits. This process, he believed, created an explicit commitment to instructional leadership growth.

Administrative emergency triage. Cluster managers in the region were asked to assist and resolve problems with which principals were grappling. In these encounters, Benner attempted to attend to their administrative emergency situations and also provide convenient solutions without jeopardizing the already-planned supervisory agenda. He provided an example of how he tackled these urgent situations and why he tried to be there for them:

> Sometimes, I am urgently called for administrative matters. For example, I had an email from a principal to see me urgently. I replied, 'Tell me about the situation. Why do you need to see me?' and 'Okay…I can be there on Thursday morning.' I clearly recognized the stressful situations when I was a school principal. It is amazing what happens…let them know about things I know that actually remove that stress, and then you can make better decisions. …and so, you get somebody's trust where you can talk those things through, knowing it is not going to be reflected on your evaluation.

From his statement, Benner's previous experience as a principal made him acutely aware of the stress facing principals faced. He cherished the experience as it brought joy and happiness that outweighed the forces of negativity and stress involved in the job. It also added quality ingredients that helped in the cultivation of the supervisory relationship—trust and deeper intimacy. In addition, the creation of a safe, supportive, and non-threatening environment was a key factor to openness and comfort in the evaluation process.

Appreciative approach important. In his first years as a cluster manager, Benner had the tendency to determine the supervisory approach after having time to get to know the principals. "Once I had done that, my approach would be determined," he stated. It was not too long after, that a prominent experience made him ponder and reflect upon his approaches and change his outlook on supervision. "One principal kicked me out. She did not like me being directive," he recalled. Benner felt that the directive approach might have been insulting and disturbing to some principals, even when it was the perfect match for their developmental performance level.

The defiance and resistance of principals to the directive approach "could be its narrow focus on what is wrong," "personal trait that they [principals] don't like being told what to do," or "could be the years of experience that they feel they are expert in their doing." Realizing that the directive approach inflamed the supervisory relationship, Benner shifted from using a developmental model to resting on an alternative approach, which was the "appreciative approach that accepts and appreciates the individual as they are." With the appreciative approach, nervousness is drastically decreased, creativity is

highly stimulated, and openness is established—all of which are developed and built through ongoing dialogue and mutual understanding. Benner narrated:

> I work now through the appreciative approach. I really like this because it provides new opportunities. My first step [is] to identify their needs and somehow bring [those] needs to the forefront. Sitting back and doing nothing does not fulfil my decree. I don't tell people to do things. As I said, with my reflective questions, I lead them to the answer, which I already know. So, it is all about the reflective questioning and conversation we have.

By crafting reflective and guiding questions accompanied with freedom and support to respond, the cluster manager can empower principals to step an extra mile and take ownership of their learning. Benner was captivated by the fact that the appreciative approach, when properly enacted, could inspire such positive action and yield a high level of performance.

Ongoing constructive feedback. During a discussion on feedback, Benner shared his experience with, and position on, the importance of constructive feedback. He expressed how difficult it is for many cluster managers to understand and practice the necessary skill of "constructive criticism" which promotes confidence rather than give negative feedback which creates stress and distress for principals. Where negative feedback becomes a vicious, self-walking, energy-absorbing circle forcing principals to avoid seeing outside the circle for performance improvement, Benner highlighted that cluster managers can change this attitude by using alternative words like "opportunities" rather than words like "weaknesses," "obstacles," or "threats" that elicited negative feelings. He expounded with an example:

When I tell principals, 'here are your strengths and weaknesses…' what happens

is that they walk out sighing and say, 'I am not doing anything good. I am not

good at anything.' It is a personal identity issue when we start talking [about]

weaknesses. Instead, I would say, 'What opportunities do you have to make it

better?' So, I am not pointing out their weaknesses…I am saying there are things

you can actually do to make this better. And I have not taken energy away from

principals who have put forth all of their energy to make this happen. With

principals, I use strengths, opportunities…aspirations, and how we get results.

Apart from carefulness in approaching feedback, Benner explicitly stated that "feedback

is not a one-time thing…it is a continuous process that lasts to the very end." Because

ADEC has three trimesters, Benner used this to create "a timely schedule" for feedback.

During trimester one he gathered information and data on areas of development for his

principals in order to use trimester two to address any issues stemming from that process.

He then used data and evidence to solidify his feedback and bring meaningful learning

opportunities to ensure his principals were on track to meet their specific learning goals.

Shared practices based professional development. As leadership expertise has

increased in the district, Benner and his team of cluster managers have aspired to

circulate it among principals through the establishment of professional development

seminars that encourage its dissemination. "We really try to disseminate the expertise of

principals by using the PDs," Benner said. The cluster managers' primary goal was to

connect school leaders together to promote the discussion of various challenging topics,

help each find ways to tackle current challenges, and encourage them to share best

practices— ultimately steward a body of knowledge and foster collaboration.

These monthly PDs were structured for the full year with a focus on topic

selection and group arrangement. Each PD session was broken down into three connected

parts: presentation from cluster managers, principals sharing successes within their

schools in common areas, and a co-consulting piece where issues are brought to the table

to brainstorm strategic problem solving approaches. Benner met with each principal

following a PD to elicit their plans and strategy for effective implementation of useful

information gleaned from the PD experience. "In general, we call them PDs, but they are

not PDs for everyone. They are generally related to what you have to do in your school to

keep moving forward," he admitted. Finally, professional development "is not something

you get," but rather, "it is something you participate in and learn from because you take

responsibility for your own learning."

Professional goals monitored. At the beginning of the year, principals are

required to set specific goals to focus, and work, on throughout the year. Setting goals

accompanied by an "actionable plan is critical for success in achieving those goals,"

Benner noted. Goals must be "written down by principals," "revised by cluster

managers," and later "reviewed by both to check progress during the process." Taking

smaller steps toward professional goals in conjunction with an action plan helps ensure

goals are attainable. Benner expressed the importance of connecting the selected goals

with school needs:

> I have a principal who identified her school improvement plan as increasing
>
> reading and speaking skills, for example. And I know we have been discussing
>
> it…working on it, looking for the evidence that shows it is improving. I review
>
> her goals and she is going to focus more on this particular area: strategies for

reading. That is my job as a cluster manager: to see the evidence. But if I don't

see a connection, then we to sit down and discuss why I am not seeing it.

When a disconnect is noted, the next step is to locate evidence of what individual

principals are doing improperly and discuss what they should be doing instead. He also

indicated that schools are there for student achievement, so everything must be aligned to

that end: safety, resources, professional development, teaching, and learning. "It is my

belief that if people know how to do it, they will be doing it, unless they are lazy," he

ended.

Summative Evaluation

Rituals of summative evaluation. To prepare for the year-end summative

evaluation, the cluster managers evaluate the end-product, overall performance, and

quality of the principal throughout the year. Benner affirmed that a secondary cluster

manager is a mandatory witness for the summative evaluation meeting. Convention

requires two cluster managers: the primary cluster manager charged with supervising,

mentoring, guiding, and advising the principal during the year; and the secondary cluster

manager witnessing that all procedures in the summative meeting are aligned with ADEC

protocol and providing a partial voice to what the principal deserves for a performance

rating.

Self-evaluation discussion. While principals are invited to perform a self-

evaluation, cluster managers are also invited to make an initial evaluation of the

principals prior to the final meeting. On the summative evaluation day, both educators sit

down to discuss evaluations openly and fairly. Benner believes the biggest challenge at

this point in the meeting is comparing the principal's self-evaluation and the initial

evaluation of the cluster manager and ultimately discussing discrepancies and fairly examining large gaps between the two. It is true that "everyone has a right to speak, defend, communicate, and voice concern—but not everyone has a right to be right." In situations with significant discrepancy, Benner attempted to reach a settlement among ratings by asking the principal to provide corresponding evidence from his or her portfolio. Nonetheless, if this was not enough to create consensus, then he requested input from the secondary cluster manager. He commented on this matter:

> We would go and sit down with the principal and we would take a look at it [the initial evaluation]. If there was any difference on what they say and what I believe, we talked about it and examined the evidence. It was great if we came to an agreement. If we did not agree, then we rechecked the evidence; and if I still did not agree, they might accept that…but if they did not accept that, then it was fine. That is what the other cluster manager is all about. They look through your evidence as well. We discussed it together.

As explicitly stated above, Benner attempted several times to invoke logic before involving the secondary cluster manager's review and opinion on the area of disagreement. For him, the thoughtful use of a second opinion provided worthwhile and unbiased judgment.

Specific feedback included. When the discussion between the principal and cluster managers ends, the latter sit for some minutes to conclude the meeting and announce the final decision regarding ratings and the overall evaluation score. Benner affirmed that the two cluster managers must indicate consensus by signing the evaluation form together. He shared:

You have to reassure your colleagues, and that is a part of the process. When the

decision has been made, you got my signature and the other cluster [manager's]

signature. It is a decree that two cluster managers have to sign off on the

evaluation.

Benner repeated several times that with the majority of his principals, the summative

evaluation was not a difficult task because he spent the entire year supervising their

leadership and monitoring their progress during the allotted supervisory time. Eventually,

"we sit and then decide together if they have made it. If they have made it, great! If they

have not, we see what else we can do," he stated.

The results from the summative evaluation serve as feedback for the principal. In

Benner's case, specific feedback is delivered rather than general feedback so that every

principal is aware of all aspects of their performance and functioning. These feedback

ratings on all criteria then serve as a guide to pave principals' future goals toward

personal growth and improvement and to help them make positive changes in their school

that would level-up their evaluation performance. He was not satisfied with the

statements and behavioral summaries that indicated the level of performance for

individual principals during the summative meeting. Rather, he used a general statement

to guide principals in their next action via a separate follow-up meeting. For example, if a

principal was proficient in "school planning," then Benner would engage in reflective

dialogue with that principal and explore what opportunities to reach the level

"accomplished." This required time, resources, and expertise on the part of the principal.

Benner accentuated that if there was no specific guiding feedback embedded to

provide concrete strides for principals to improve when cluster managers spend time

discussing final scores and formulating comments, then "the principals [would] be lost, arguing themselves blue in the face" that they never "received a learning opportunity that guided them into corrective future actions."

Incentives and Consequences

Incentives absent. While no incentive is applied for high-evaluation performance, some high-scoring principals are selected for new job opportunities, such as executive principal. This position is similar to that of the cluster manager. Such a promotion is not directly related to their individual evaluation, but rather based on two premises: (1) Irtiqa's report that determines the quality and effectiveness of school performance; and (2) an individual interview that determines the ability, skills, and knowledge of principals to be the perfect candidate to effectively undertake this position. Regardless of this initiative, ADEC is supposed "to motivate its principals as they make progress toward improving leadership performance in their yearly summative evaluation." Thus the lack of a reward system might actually have a detrimental impact on principals' motivation, commitment, and energy.

Punitive measures absent. Shifting the topic to consequences, Benner said that in the United Arab Emirates, where it is extremely difficult to dismiss Emirate teachers and leaders for obtaining poor evaluations, the high-stakes employment decisions were equivocal. "Only those downstairs [ADEC officials] make those decisions and we cluster managers only provide them with evaluation results," stated Benner. Nevertheless, he never witnessed any termination applied to any principals in his career time as a cluster manager. With that being said, it is true that poorly-accumulated performance strains supervisors and is costly to the organization. In this evaluation system, and despite the

need to differentiate and eliminate poor quality, Benner acknowledged that the evaluation results are subjective and grounded in biased reviews in the absence of objective performance data and assessment metrics.

In summary, the major findings derived from cluster manager Benner's interview are as follows:

- The principal evaluation is a means of monitoring principal's effectiveness and offering differentiated professional supervision for principals;

- The growth in leadership practice due to the establishment of evaluation is visible and touchable;

- The evaluation criteria mostly mirror the professional standards and real work of principals. To meet the evaluation criteria, principles are required to perform a range of educational leadership activities with appropriateness and effectiveness in schools;

- The evaluation criteria have some disturbing concerns—subjectivity in interpretation, lack of leadership focus, and higher levels of difficulty with insufficient feasibility;

- Despite the remedial interventions conducted among cluster managers to create common definitions and meanings regarding evaluation criteria, the results are still unsatisfactory, and criteria remain subjective because the meeting clarifies them in general ways rather than explaining in more details;

- The cluster managers' weekly supervisory visits offer a greater understanding of the scope of principals' leadership skills and what is going on in their school— thus minimizing the need to ask for portfolio evidence;

- The roles of cluster managers in the evaluation process vary from supervising, to mentoring, guiding, evaluating, advising, mediating, supporting, and motivating principals with the ultimate goal of increasing opportunities for learning and growth;

- The cluster manager is considered a liaison between public school principals and ADEC;

- The cluster manager is granted greater autonomy in the evaluation process to help in scheduling and structuring supervisory agendas to be more differentiated and individualized for principal needs;

- No ongoing professional development is provided for cluster managers to help them in their supervisory and evaluative responsibilities;

- The evaluation process is regarded as formative until the end of the year where it becomes summative, though no factual high-stakes decisions ensue;

- The cluster manager might attend to administrative emergency situations encountered by principals that cause stress;

- Many principals are defiant and resistant when the directive approach is used;

- The appreciative inquiry approach is widely acceptable and beneficial to principals;

- Feedback is not a one-time thing; rather, it is a continuous process;

- The primary goal of professional development is to connect school leaders together around a table that encourages principals to discuss various challenging topics, help each other find ways to tackle current challenges, and share best practices;

- While principals are required to set professional goals in ADEC's portal, cluster managers are tasked with reviewing, revising, and giving approval to the goals set;

- The summative evaluation meeting cannot be validated without the involvement of a secondary cluster manager, who is a mandatory part of the evaluation;

- Principals are required to self-evaluate themselves before the summative meeting;

- When disagreements occur between the principal and the primary cluster manager regarding ratings, the primary cluster manager may ask the principal to present evidence from his or her portfolio. If the disagreement persists, then the primary cluster manager may engage the secondary cluster manager to provide a second opinion on the disagreed points;

- The two cluster managers must agree with each other and sign off together regarding ratings and the overall evaluation score of principals;

- The cluster manager provides specific feedback that helps guide principals toward their future goals and improvement; and

- Neither incentives nor consequences are applied to evaluation results.

What follows is Chapter Five, which unfolds the cross-case analysis where the emergent codes and categories form each case were examined to capture common patterns within the overall data.

CHAPTER 5

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the principal evaluation process and supervisory practices that cluster managers (evaluators) and principals follow throughout the academic year. This study explored the perspectives of principals and cluster managers on principal evaluation practices and the nature of supervision provided to them. The three major aspects of this topic include the principal evaluation process provided for current administrators; supervision as a means for supporting and improving school leaders; and the extent of learning and growth found within evaluative and supervisory processes and practices.

This study was conducted in the second largest school district in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, that of Al-Ain. Nine educators participated in this study—three male school principals and three female school principals, each leading different school cycles (levels); and three cluster managers (one male and two females) supervising and evaluating school principals in three different cycles (primary, middle, and high school levels).

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. How is the principal evaluation process conducted as described and experienced by public school principals in Al-Ain city?

2. What are the supervisory approaches selected by cluster managers in the principal evaluation process?

3. In what ways do the supervisory approaches employed by cluster managers help principals sustain growth and development?

Findings of Cross-Case Analysis

A cross-case analysis was implemented after each case was examined individually using within-case analyses. During the cross-case analysis, the researcher collectively examined the emergent codes and categories from each case to capture common patterns within the overall data. The findings were grouped into salient themes—the practices that manifested themselves across all cases. The constant comparative method was used as a means for capturing similarities and differences across data, finding links in the data, and identifying emerging themes. The findings from the cross-case analysis are presented in this chapter aligned to the research questions.

This cross-case analysis was based on data, primarily the interviews of the principals and the cluster managers. The cross-case analysis yielded 10 themes that were consistent among the principals participating in the study:

1. Cluster managers cause inequality in the evaluation process;

2. Evaluation criteria: Aligned, yet unclear, universal, and impractical;

3. Insufficient focus on instructional leadership;

4. Inconsistent supervisory approaches;

5. Cluster managers hinder learning during the evaluation process;

6. Exceptional cluster managers promoting learning and development;

7. Fragmented and unfocused professional development;

8. Ineffective feedback during the evaluation process;

9. Emerging tensions at the summative evaluation; and

10. Lack of incentive and punitive measures in principal evaluations.

The study included six principals as displayed in Table 5.1, and three cluster managers as displayed in Table 5.2. Male and female principals were equal in terms of number of participants, gender, national origin (Emiratis), and number of cycles (elementary, middle, and high school). Furthermore, a 12-year difference in principal administrative experience existed between the least experienced (14 years) and the most veteran principal (26 years). Due to the preference of new principals not to participate in this study, the researcher remained focused on those with at least three years of experiences with the current principal evaluation and supervision as defined in the selection criteria.

Table 5.1

Overview of School Principals (All Names are Pseudonyms)

Participants	Gender	Years of Experience as a Principal	School Level	Evaluation Score	School Evaluation Score
Salama	Female	18	Cycle I	Accomplished	B
Nora	Female	23	Cycle II	Exemplary	A
Shamsa	Female	17	Cycle III	Exemplary	A
Majed	Male	18	Cycle I	Accomplished	A
Ali	Male	26	Cycle II	Accomplished	B
Sultan	Male	14	Cycle III	Accomplished	D

Unlike school principals, the study's cluster manager selection was more cycle-oriented (elementary, middle, and high school levels) and female-dominant. While several cluster managers agreed to participate prior to beginning the study, they later

withdrew prior to the appointed interview because of changes in their school schedules or upcoming urgent matters. As shown in Table 5.2., the years of experience of cluster managers in evaluating and supervising principals in the Al-Ain district ranged from three to four years. Each cluster manager led one cycle and had a different number of assigned principals to supervise and evaluate.

Table 5.2

Overview of Cluster Managers (All Names are Pseudonyms)

Participants	Gender	Nationality	Years of Experience as a Cluster Manager	School Level Assigned	Number of Principals Assigned
Jennifer	Female	American	3	Cycle I	9
Maria	Female	American	4	Cycle II	8
Benner	Male	Canadian	6	Cycle III	15

The following section is an exploration of key themes derived from the cross-case analysis. The first theme discusses the critical position of cluster managers in determining the quality of principal evaluation.

Theme One: Cluster Managers Cause Inequality in the Evaluation Process

Principals revealed that increases and decreases in the quality of the principal evaluation were often directly related to cluster managers' skill levels in supervision and evaluation. According to most participants, cluster managers were the key cause of quality fluctuations in the evaluation process. This theme was dominated by most of the participants who identified their evaluation process as "wavering in quality" or "unbalanced" as cluster managers engaged in the process with different supervisory

qualities, experiences, roles, and expectations. As a result, the overall quality of evaluation swung from poor to excellent, and vice versa.

Principals expressed similar opinions that the evaluation process was invariably impacted by the individual cluster manager's effectiveness. In some years, they described it as "horrible," and other times as "extraordinary." Majed rated the quality of the evaluation process as "average" or "below" during best of times, pointing to the varying degrees of cluster managers' supervisory practices and evaluative skills. Inadequate preparation and training of cluster managers was blamed for the decreasing evaluation quality. Furthermore, Ali emphasized that bringing unprepared cluster managers was tantamount to pouring evaluation down the drain.

Certainly, cluster managers' readiness to undertake supervisory and evaluative roles is extremely dependent on "their personal efforts, attitudes toward work, and prior experiences as former principals." However, limitations in these areas are often the result of a lack of ongoing professional development. Nora indicated that the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) did not provide the necessary professional training to help cluster managers understand how their expertise and guidance impacted principals. ADEC was established to monitor and oversee the educational system in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, which includes the city of Al-Ain. Cluster managers were not trained to keep current with innovative knowledge of new and effective leadership practices or how to avoid costly mistakes while meeting the challenges of mentoring and supervising their assigned principals.

The cluster manager participants confirmed that no professional development had been provided to them. Nonetheless, Benner admired the diverse body of supervisors

coming from "different countries, cultures, and experiences" —all molded and shaped by different educational systems. While this was beneficial in some ways, it also yielded variations and disparities in their levels of performance in supervision and evaluation. As a result, Benner called for professional development to "close that gap" among cluster managers.

Random practices associated with unclear supervisory roles and expectations of cluster managers also contributed to the wavering quality of principal evaluation. "I am not sure if evaluation can be achieved [when] each cluster [manager] has different roles," Nora stated. Without clear roles or guidelines, cluster managers cannot complete supervisory tasks with a clear focus. It is not beneficial to merely stick to vague, undefined collections of general responsibilities like "supervise," "evaluate," "support," "manage," and "coach" outlined in their job descriptions. Because every word embodies a different meaning and functionality for each individual cluster manager, such a practice erodes the evaluation process.

Furthermore, as Sultan expressed, unclear roles and guideline led to a "lack of focus, confusing and conflicting situations, and haphazard practices." All of these prevented the evaluation process from achieving "its desired goals and anticipated benefits" for school principals. It was apparent from the principals' perceptions that the lack of clarity for cluster managers caused them to each follow different paths to the desired outcome, illustrating experiences that lacked sound evaluation practices.

Throughout their narratives, cluster managers confirmed strict adherence to their "job description as a guide" for supervisory work, but they noted that no professional standards or official guidelines were provided to them to anchor the work required for

them to fulfil their roles. The lack of guidelines, coupled with unbridled latitude and flexibility escalated the difficulties for cluster managers, especially for those who lacked expertise in proper supervision that fit the needs of principals and the priorities of their schools.

Only a few principals acknowledged having "decent" evaluation experiences, with a few cluster managers who passionately passed down the craft of leadership, regardless of the unclear guidelines and roles or the enormous amount of autonomy given to them. Shamsa and Nora provided examples in which a few passionate cluster managers leveraged the degree of latitude and absent guidelines to create their own agenda. These cluster managers provided "personalized, engaging, collaborative, and meaningful supervision" coupled with the observation and shadowing of classroom activities to refine the instructional leadership skills of their principals. Shamsa concluded that with the absence of roles and guidelines to direct their work, "it [was] up to their personal effort to make the process a success." For these reasons, many principals explicitly expressed that cluster managers were "key to a successful evaluation."

In conclusion, different supervisory skills, experiences, roles, and expectations create substantial variation in the quality of principal evaluation. Professional development is warranted to close the performance gap among cluster managers. Clear roles with strong guidelines must to be established to bring sharper focus into the evaluation process. Finally, bestowing a great amount of latitude and flexibility to cluster managers in formulating their own supervisory agenda could be a double-edged sword in the current evaluation, bringing either positive or disastrous supervisory experiences as principal participants described about the experiences throughout the evaluation process.

Theme Two: Evaluation Criteria: Aligned, yet Unclear, Universal, and Impractical

The evaluation criteria, as expressed by participants, mirrored professional standards, demonstrating the core leadership work and responsibilities of principals. Some of these responsibilities included "leading strategically," "leading teaching and learning," "leading people," "leading the organization," and "leading the community." Participants expressed that such categories were translated into behavioral summaries that were distributed onto a continuum performance scale. This scale included the following: "pre-foundation, foundation, emerging, established, accomplished, and exemplary." Each contained a subsection called "elements or criteria." However, all participants noted that the evaluation criteria held several critical faults, such as inconsistent interpretations, universal or one-size-fits-all rubrics for all principals, and impractical implementations—creating tensions during formative and summative evaluation.

Five principals elaborated about the confusion created by inadequate information in the evaluation rubric and expressed their frustration with the various interpretations made by their cluster managers. Shamsa, for instance, adamantly stated that behavioral summary descriptions in the rubric should provide "clear performance direction," clarify "important performance characteristics," and be inherently "consistent across the board within cluster manager teams." Nora wished for the rubric to be like those elaborated in the teacher evaluation system, where enriched supporting documents delineated each criterion with scenarios and examples. "From A to Z, [they described] how to achieve various performance levels and what evidence was needed to support [each], with additional examples and descriptive actions," Nora shared.

Principals called for clear definitions and interpretations of criteria and a collective understanding between all cluster managers to ensure the consistent dissemination of information to principals. Therefore, placing emphasis on creating a common language around the evaluation criteria is a powerful step in the principal's quest "to achieve expectations and requirements" and ensures less confusion clouding the process for both the principals and cluster managers. Sultan engaged in precautionary measures from the onset of the evaluation process by setting meetings with his assigned cluster manager to clear up the ambiguities, gain mutual understandings, clarify potential dilemmas, and avoid clashes at the summative evaluation meeting. Through his experience, Sultan noticed that "not all cluster managers would bother to discuss the evaluation rubric and its components at the beginning of [the] evaluation," a pattern of behavior that adds to the frustrations expressed by the principals.

In contrast, all cluster manager participants agreed on the susceptibility of the evaluation criteria in producing an infinite number of interpretations. For example, Maria stated, "It is not an absolute. I might judge a principal as accomplished, and another cluster manager might judge the same principal as exemplary for the same criterion." Benner, also a cluster manager, supported the claim when he reported, "There is some kind of choice I make within each of these criteria, which might be completely different for another cluster manager." Maria also found benefit for hosting a series of meetings and workshops among cluster managers and principals to arrive at common definitions for evaluation standards and their criteria. While this provided a baseline of agreement, it was futile without in-depth articulation and adequate examples to cover all aspects of the evaluation criteria.

Cluster managers revealed that initial individualized meetings with their principals provided an opportunity for all to discuss the required data and evidence necessary to support and fulfill the defined expectations of each criterion, thereby preventing misunderstandings and misconceptions. Maria explained the meetings were a turning point that helped principals put scattered puzzle pieces into the right places to make necessary changes in their behavior and leave with a new level of confidence.

Participants believed the universality of evaluation criteria for all principals was a critical issue that needed addressing. Salama voiced her concern that:

It [was] an unfair thing to evaluate all principals using one same tool without considering different variables—school cycles, geographical location of schools, student population, number of teachers, curricula taught, and the availability of resources and materials—each principal [had] in her school building.

Salama questioned whether this approach could work sufficiently for all principals. Majed further emphasized the differences existing within same school levels—impacting not only the nature of the individual principal's work, but also their evaluations.

Nora and Shamsa shared similar perspectives on the challenges faced by principals who were transferred into low-performing schools in crisis and chaos. The one-size-fits-all rubric did not allow for exceptions for such situations; rather, these approaches treated every principal the same. Overcoming the barriers and improving quality in challenging schools can require several years, and the current evaluation rubric does not consider these extenuating circumstances. Therefore, cluster managers need to be aware of "the past history of each school as well as current challenges." Ali argued that when creating specific individual rubrics tailored to address the diverse needs of

schools is impossible, supervisors should at least be more "sensible and flexible" as they evaluate school leaders.

From a cluster manager's standpoint, Maria noted that differing variables and situations encountered by principals requires a rigorous examination of each principal on a case-by-case basis when supervising and evaluating. Without such considerations, tensions and claims of unfair treatment are likely to emerge between principals. As expressed by both the cluster managers and the principals, cluster manager flexibility creates a fair and efficient principal evaluation.

Finally, some of the criteria regarding "continuous learning" and "distributed leadership" were not applicable or achievable, as described by most of the participants. Specifically, three principals and one cluster manager showed their concern with this issue and provided the following example of a specific criterion of continuous learning: "Principals are to present research findings at national and international conferences regarding specific educational topics that have been proven in this school and replicated at other schools." Benner also expressed his difficulty achieving this criterion as a cluster manager: "That is a pretty difficult place to be. I am not sure if I would be there close to it because of the replication."

For many principals, the idea of presenting "research findings at national and international conferences" was appealing but required an excessive amount of time and effort. More importantly, permission from ADEC for attending those conferences was required to leave the school, and many principals' requests were rejected. Having been rejected several times herself without apparent reason, Nora stated, "They stopped me

more than once from attending and participating in international conferences that focused on school leadership, even though their rubric specifically requested it."

Nora suggested that the evaluation rubric be more transparent and freer from "significant paradoxes" to help principals accomplish higher levels of performance. She added that upon creating an evaluation rubric, ADEC "should identify exactly what they want their school leaders to achieve" and provide necessary and appropriate resources, such as "budget," "time," and "approval" required for the successful achievement of those established criteria. Benner also suggested that the evaluation criteria be feasible, workable, and fit the cultural context of the UAE, rather than thoughtlessly adopting experiences of other countries that have no fundamental common ground.

In summary, all participants believed that the evaluation criteria aligned with the professional standards that dictated and defined the principals' daily work. Nevertheless, they identified significant issues inherent in the evaluation criteria that needed careful attention: the lack of clear and valid interpretations for each criterion and behavioral summaries; the inability of evaluation criteria to address the diverse needs, variables, and challenging situations faced by school principals; and the impracticality of some evaluation criteria.

Theme Three: Insufficient Focus on Instructional Leadership

Inadequate focus on instructional leadership during the evaluation process was one of the major themes that emerged in this study. Principals especially expressed that the supervision embedded in the process focused more on administrative duties than instructional leadership. Many noted that although cluster managers highlighted instructional leadership practices as the heart of elevating teaching and learning, they did

not infuse its value into the schools during the process. Instead, their focus was building principals as managers. Principals believed that with the changing roles of school leaders in the current era, instructional leadership was an indispensable weapon in their armory for success.

The principals acknowledged that their roles and responsibilities had significantly shifted over the past decade from building managers to instructional leaders—a shift that reflected their professional standards. Similarly, the evaluation criteria and written policies of the principal evaluation were amended to reflect these changes, however; principals' accounts note that the supervision embedded in the evaluation process indicate otherwise. Salama stated that administrative matters and a focus on solving management problems within the building were given greater weight than time afforded conversation and supervision regarding instructional leadership. She felt slighted in the process that should have mentored her growth as an instructional leader in her building.

Like Salama, Nora lamented that most cluster managers adhered solely to administrative matters, without understanding the importance of the instructional leadership domain. She also added that most cluster managers chose not to observe instructional leadership skills and routine duties within the classrooms or school boundaries. Shamsa expounded on the obsession of her cluster managers toward school management when she said:

> My cluster managers always sit down and have endless conversations about different topics of school management. From preparations for standardized exams, to new legislations, finance, parent and teacher complaints, and so on…But all of this has nothing to do with my instructional leadership roles.

Corroborating her statement, Majed highlighted that cluster managers burned precious supervision time by focusing on management issues for hours while overlooking topics associated with the very core practices of instructional leadership.

Principals frequently reverberated that supervision should extend beyond the managerial domain, stretch over school improvement plans and goals, and go outside to reach classroom instruction and student data within the school. Nonetheless, within their eight years of working with cluster managers, only a few principals were exposed to supervision conducted by "exceptional" cluster managers who put the spotlight on instructional leadership elements.

According to the principals, these few cluster managers devoted a sacred portion of their supervision to improving instructional leadership practices by thoroughly shadowing principals in their classrooms, discussing observations and instructional methods, interacting with and collecting data, and monitoring school progress in many ways during the evaluation process. For them, an instructional leadership focus, rather than strictly a managerial one, was essential for the refinement of principals' instructional leadership practices. The difference between cluster managers who focused on management and those who centered their efforts on instructional leadership was attributed to their varying supervisory skills, expectations, and roles in the evaluation process.

The three cluster managers who were interviewed emphasized the need for principals to be capable of mastering both domains (school management and instructional leadership) to further enhance teacher effectiveness, student learning, and school success. However, all of them put more emphasis on the "instructional leadership" aspect because

that is what Emirate principals needed the most. Jennifer pointed out, "Leadership impacts student learning" when it is directed at "improving instructional practices," which leads to increased "student achievement." For this reason, she critically observed inside and outside the classrooms by measuring teaching competency, the classroom environment, student engagement, the school climate, professional responsibilities, and interactions.

Similarly, Maria underscored the "instructional side" of the formative evaluation, which was an opportunity for refining the instructional leadership skills of principals that affected teaching quality and student learning in schools. Likewise, Benner made a robust commitment to the "instructional leadership growth" of principals by orchestrating a series of "walk-through" observations, which were followed by immediate reflective discussions to teach his principals how to better observe, evaluate, and improve the instructional practices of their teachers. As described in the individual cluster manager cases, all acted with a sense of urgency and prioritized the instructional leadership practices within their supervisory agenda for principals to ensure powerful results in school performance.

Overall, principals' perceptions of their new roles and responsibilities have changed to align with those of instructional leaders as mirrored in their professional standards, evaluation criteria, and written policies. However, weekly supervision by assigned cluster managers limited their focus to administrative matters and solving management problems, largely discounting instructional leadership. Still, a few principals admitted having a valuable experience with a few cluster managers who valued and enacted supervision with instructional leadership as a cornerstone in their agenda. The

principals attributed the variance in cluster managers' priorities to their different skills, qualities, expectations, and roles. Even so, the interviewed cluster managers, aside from balancing management and instructional practices, demonstrated that making instructional leadership a priority for supervision is the most impactful investment toward student achievement and school success.

Theme Four: Inconsistent Supervisory Approaches

Throughout the evaluation process cluster managers employed a variety of supervisory approaches that were inconsistent and unmatched to the developmental levels of their principals, who described these approaches as changing from one cluster manager to another and from conversation to conversation. The cluster managers, however, insisted that their methods were methodical and thoughtful. Principals expressed that even exchanges involving the same principal and cluster manager varied from one meeting to the next—causing them to perceive the supervision embedded in the evaluation process as inconsistent and thereby created needless confusion for individual principals.

According to the principals, some cluster managers employed a "directive approach" that involved "giving orders" and telling them "what to do." Others used a "collaborative approach" by "exchanging ideas and expertise in conversations," while a third type used a "non-directive approach," allowing principals to take the lead in problem-solving and decision-making. The constant changes in supervisory approaches were overwhelming for the principals, especially those who experienced more than one cluster manager over the years. Furthermore, every time a cluster manager was reassigned, no connection was made with the approach of the former cluster manager, an

indicator of "randomness" and "carelessness" in their selection that left the principal vulnerable mid-way through the process.

Principals Nora, Shamsa, and Ali each shared a similar experience of inconsistent supervisory approaches by their cluster managers, where there was no stability or smooth transition when a new cluster manager took over, as if each year of evaluation for principals was a new chapter and completely unrelated to the previous one. Only a few principals cherished their experiences with a small number of cluster managers who were able to match their supervisory approaches with their developmental levels and experiences. Sultan witnessed that these cluster managers were efficiently able to shift from one approach to another as growth and progression were manifested by principals during the evaluation process.

The consensus among many of the principals was that shifting supervisory approaches was acceptable if cluster managers were able to identify when to employ each. Principal Ali stated, "Supervision cannot function properly without matching supervisory approach and style from the beginning." This sentiment speaks to the need for supervisors to be aware of the current realities of those they supervise and authentically adjust their approaches to be supportive and suitable. The principals noted that the lack of thought and care dedicated to each situation, and the inconsistent application of supervisory approaches eroded the value of "feedback" and "trust" in the supervisory relationship, and ultimately led to the uninformed and arbitrary process by which decisions were made.

The cluster managers voiced significantly different perspectives of their consistency in using supervisory approaches (whether directive, collaborative, or non-

directive). They reported that their decisions as to which supervisory approach to use were vital to the success of any evaluation process, a sentiment that is true in theory but lacked in practice especially when other critical factors influenced the selection of supervisory approaches. For instance, despite her efforts to match her principals according to their developmental levels and capabilities, Jennifer noted that her "selected supervisory approach…was sometimes compromised and downgraded by language deficits." Her statement indicates she assumes her principals are hindered because English is not their first language. Apparently, she felt the need to employ a "directive approach" to convey her message easily and communicate in simple English because of the language barrier.

Maria considered "several elements" such as "personality, ability, and receptiveness" when selecting her approach for supervising principals. She explained that in urgent situations necessitating quick decisions, she often changed her supervisory approach, even if it was not the best fit for the principal. Her point-of-view indicated some inconsistency in her application of supervisory approaches, but suggested purpose and thoughtfulness that was not perceived by the principals.

On a similar note, Benner decided to shift from using a developmental model to an alternative approach, which was the "appreciative approach that accepts and appreciates the individual as they are." His decision was made after encountering multiple incidents of defiance and resistance by principals to the directive approach that he previously employed. "One principal kicked me out. She [the school principal] did not like me being directive," he recalled. Benner felt that the directive approach was offensive and upsetting to some principals, even when it was the perfect match for their

developmental performance level. He explained that principals' resistance to the directive approach "could [have been] its narrow focus on what was wrong," "personal traits that they [(principals)] didn't' like being told what to do," or "years of experience that they felt they were expert in their doing." Principals consistently depicted the directive approach as a "fatal arrow" that "could destroy the supervisory relationship."

In conclusion, the principals believed that inconsistency in supervisory approaches stemmed from a lack of understanding and rigorous examination by cluster managers tasked with providing a thorough and meaningful learning environment throughout the evaluation process. The cluster managers, on the other hand, expressed that they used methodology and purpose in the selection of their supervisory approaches. This contradiction speaks to the prevalent communication disconnect between cluster managers and principals. This disconnect eroded the trust necessary to improve practices for both parties.

Theme Five: Cluster Managers Hinder Learning During the Evaluation Process

Study participants expressed that when cluster managers approached the formative evaluation with an attitude of "abandonment," "micromanagement," or "gotcha," it was harmful to supervisory relationships, the desired learning growth, and the ultimate purpose of the evaluation process. Such practices put individual principals under intense pressure, intimidation, and fear throughout the evaluation process, whether intended or not, and illustrated the negative experiences between principals and cluster managers who exercised such approaches.

The "abandoning" cluster manager was described by participants as one who rarely visited their schools, communicated minimally through phone calls or emails, and

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essentially existed in absentia during the entire formative evaluation process. However, even more striking to principals was that at the summative evaluation, these cluster managers "evaluated [principals] as if they knew everything," despite their virtual abandonment throughout the process. Such negligible supervision holds little weight in the improvement process and long absences can negatively affect evaluation. Sultan shared some common behaviors of his absent cluster managers:

> They seldom came to the school and asked this close-ended question: 'Is everything alright in the school?' Then, they immediately left without saying a word after I replied, 'Yes, everything is fine.' I did not hear from them until the end of the semester.

Sultan casted doubts on the benefits gained from supervision and evaluation when cluster managers excluded themselves from the formative evaluation. Likewise, Majed explained that cluster managers who were not regular visitors in the school buildings could not effectively capture an accurate picture of principals' performance and therefore, he added, they were unable to provide appropriate guidance or a sound judgement on the final evaluation report.

From the cluster managers' perspectives, engagement and interaction throughout the formative piece was a prerequisite for success within the evaluation process. For instance, Jennifer underlined the importance of her weekly visits that provided her with a deeper understanding of principals' leadership practices, teaching and learning at their schools, student discipline, and other activities implemented to enhance the overall quality of school performance. For Benner, however, nothing was more helpful for principals than to identify their strengths and weaknesses along the way and mold their

performance to improve their functional leadership capacities before reaching the summative checkpoint. Nonetheless, if the cluster manager is omitted from the picture, then the formative evaluation becomes worthless.

Participants cautioned that even when cluster managers were regularly present during the evaluation process, "micromanagement" and "gotcha" tactics could create a threatening environment for principals. Infusion of these activities within the formative evaluation created an ominous tone, made the learning experience futile, and transformed the evaluation into a meaningless exercise. Thus, the "micromanaging" and "gotcha" cluster managers were described as the worst types experienced by principals whose work never seemed to be good enough and who were often left feeling deflated and inept after meetings.

Sultan spoke of instances of how his cluster managers "spoon-fed principals with everything as if they were the know-it-all or superior polymaths." In these cases, the biggest challenge posed to the principals was "[how] to tolerate their presence and get them loosened up" and treat them like "equal-footing partners in the process." As stated by the principals, micro-management was not needed in the evaluation process and would be anything but productive if exercised. Exposed to, and abused by, the culture of "micro-management" and "gotcha," Majed stated, "You [cluster managers] are not out there on the school playground to prove our leadership is full of errors. [Rather,] you are there to observe and guide us on how to improve and refine our practices." With the fear of penalization always looming, principals had to learn how to suppress their leadership weaknesses when working with "micromanaging" and "gotcha" cluster managers.

When cluster managers exercised the "gotcha" tactics, the formative evaluation became a threatening environment where principals felt "a bit edgy," "intense," and "intimidated," leading them to conceal their weak areas to protect themselves during the evaluation process. Nora is an excellent example to illustrate this point. Because her cluster managers used her mistakes and errors against her as weaknesses on the summative evaluation, Nora began to hide her school problems and pretended that "everything was under control [and] proceeding exactly as planned" every time she was confronted by her cluster managers. Nora's deceptive responses which she perceived as an adaptive coping strategy resulted from her bad experiences with "gotcha" cluster managers. The deceptive responses to the cluster managers were her "defense mechanism" to cope with and survive the evaluation.

Similarly, Sultan's negative experiences with many of his cluster managers resulted in him hiding his leadership weaknesses in their presence. He noted that when he revealed his mistakes and errors while seeking assistance, his cluster managers recorded them as indicators of weakness and assigned him lower scores in the summative evaluation. Confronted repeatedly with these experiences, principals hide their vulnerabilities, bottle up their weaknesses, and become unwilling to request help during the formative evaluation. In such cases, principals perceive that everything is counted and recorded for punishment rather than for the sake of learning.

The cluster managers strongly asserted that principals dreaded relying on their supervisors if the latter had created an intimidating, odious, and threatening atmosphere in the workplace. Jennifer clarified that the roles of cluster managers in the current evaluation system included "supervising," "evaluating," "inspecting," "checking," and

"reporting" to ADEC if principals were not compliant with operational policies. Nonetheless, Jennifer was rather cautious when approaching principals about their oversights, so as not to compromise their already-established supervisory relationships and the learning process in the formative evaluation. Looking through the individual cases of cluster managers, it was apparent that the creation of a "safe," "supportive," and "non-threating environment" was essential for "openness," "comfort," and "trust" in the evaluation process.

In summary, participants highlighted situations whereby cluster managers' practices put the evaluation process at risk. They included cluster managers staying out of the picture during the formative evaluation and paying only one visit at the end of the evaluation process; obsessively micromanaging and hovering over every aspect of school life; and playing the "gotcha" game. These practices negatively impacted the supervisory relationship between cluster managers and principals and diminished learning opportunities established in the formative evaluation. As shown, all these attitudes and tactics affected the learning process.

Theme Six: Exceptional Cluster Managers Promoting Learning and Development

Participants expressed that cluster managers influenced the formation of supervisory practices by their attitudes and the conditions they brought to the evaluation process. Approaching the evaluation as an ongoing process, preparing and planning for each supervisory visit, and enacting supervision in a supportive and non-threatening environment were common conditions that a few exceptional cluster managers created within the evaluation process to make it a more authentic learning experience that fostered the development and growth of principals. All are important and must be

thoroughly considered and aligned with one another to ensure a smooth flowing

evaluation process which provides a nourishing learning experience for principals.

The participants believed that learning gains were magnified exponentially when

the cluster managers perceived and approached the evaluation as a dynamic and ongoing

process, rather than as an "occasional episode" or "one-time event" that occurred at the

end of the year. Sultan expressed the following: "Supervising principals is not a static,

one-time event! It is a continuous effort that keeps going in a cycle without ending."

Moreover, both Nora and Sultan elaborated that "exceptional" cluster managers made a

commitment to supervising, observing, and monitoring principal progression on a regular

basis. They insisted that these practices made the evaluation process unfold naturally and

achieve the purposes for which it was initially established.

Comparably, cluster manager Benner highlighted the continuation of learning

beyond the summative evaluation. He stated, "Even with the summative [evaluation]

wrapping up the evaluation process, it is still going to be formative in a way…after report

and feedback is provided, enabling them to take actions to improve their performance

next year." As narrated throughout the individual cases of principals and cluster

managers, the continuous nature of the principal evaluation was mirrored in the weekly

visits by the "exceptional cluster managers" and extended beyond the summative

evaluation. It is worth noting that these weekly visits were not random or unprepared;

rather, they were well-planned and structured with a purpose geared toward enhancing

the "leadership capacity" of principals.

Salama shared that cluster managers who made an "earnest supervisory effort" to

ensure the sessions were meticulously planned, narrowly focused, highly productive, and

deeply reflective bolstered the instructional leadership skills of the principals.

Furthermore, most principals believed that the more structured and planned weekly

supervision visits were, the more comfortable they felt with their cluster managers.

Additionally, learning was more likely in these instances as opposed to "unprepared

sessions" where the purpose and meaning was lost to stumbling and improvising in the

moment.

Similarly, cluster managers Jennifer, Maria, and Benner highlighted the need to

prepare for each supervisory visit to create a purposeful connection to the next visit.

Thus, the series of topics tackled were more "connected," "engaging," and "seamless,"

allowing for regular follow-up practices to close the gaps between previous sessions and

to provide a continual focus on learning. Jennifer strongly argued that occasional visits

and unplanned supervision were nothing but a disservice to school principals.

Despite the considerable effort that preparation required, cluster managers noted

that the payoff was boundless, especially when the planned sessions were organized and

aligned with the principals' needs. Principals recalled that their "exceptional cluster

managers" invited them into a joint endeavor relationship for composing the supervisory

agenda, ensuring the plan encompassed the varying leadership needs of the principal not

organized exclusively around the cluster managers' authority.

As well-planned supervisory sessions are implemented, an environment

conducive to learning is needed to support equally the evaluation process. Most

participants agreed that cluster managers played a key role in developing and crafting the

kind of environment needed for supervisory sessions to meet the needs of the principals.

According to the principals, such environment was only established and created by a few

cluster managers who enacted supervision within a supportive and non-threatening manner. The principals believed that the creation of a threat-free environment was an essential function of the evaluation process, where "mistakes [were] part of the learning process and relatively unimportant."

When cluster managers form a permissive environment, principals felt more comfortable sharing their concerns about school problems and issues. The principals were not afraid to be open about their weaknesses and struggles and to ask for advice and support. Nora echoed her experience with an exceptional cluster manager who comforted and inspired her on their first meeting by beginning the meeting with the following: "We are partners here. It is my responsibility to teach and supervise you. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. I want you to take risks. I want you to thrive and succeed." This specific occurrence was a significant turning point in the development of a "trusting" and "transparent" supervisory working relationship between Nora and her cluster manager.

Nora noted another example of how her exceptional cluster manager approached classroom observations with a transparent and reflective discussion in a supportive and non-threatening learning environment:

She invited us [(the administrative team)] to practice observation…once the observation was done, she would ask us what went right [and] what went wrong in the classroom. We would share our data and exchange thoughts in a safe learning environment. Next, she would tell us what we missed. For instance, I still remember her words when she said to us, 'Keep your eyes focused not only on the teacher, but also on the students.' Back then, in the classroom, we were too focused on the teacher that we overlooked some important aspects.

The learning environment created by Nora's cluster manager enabled her and other school administrators to feel comfortable sharing their data and learning from their mistakes. Shamsa and Sultan had similar experiences where their cluster managers provided supervision in a supportive learning environment that was free of threats and fueled by "trust and transparency," which made "learning easy and possible."

It was reiterated throughout the individual cases of the cluster managers that without a safe and supportive environment, dialogue did not emerge, supervisory relationships fell apart, and learning experiences were lost. Over six years of supervising and evaluating principals, Benner learned that supervision should not be an invasive exercise, but facilitative and directed at finding ways to improve and cultivate principal learning. In this sense, supervision should be "non-threatening" to ensure participation, yet "challenging" and "stimulating" to encourage exploration and contribution to the evaluation process.

In closing, participants spoke highly of their experiences with a few exceptional cluster managers who created essential conditions that fostered learning and development. Principals described these cluster managers as: (1) highly engaged and visible in the evaluation process; (2) committed to each supervisory visit with rigorous preparation and clear focus aimed toward principals' needs; and (3) exercising supervision and facilitated learning in a supportive and threat-free environment filled with openness and trust.

Theme Seven: Fragmented and Unfocused Professional Development

Little appreciation is given to the established professional development (PD) to enhance principal learning and professional growth. Eight participants described their

current PD as fragmented, excessively focused on shared practices, unresponsive to principals' needs, and generally incompatible with other initiatives to bring meaningful learning experiences. Only one cluster manager, Benner, opposed this viewpoint. He expressed that PD benefitted leaders who came together to discuss myriad challenging topics they faced in schools and encouraged them to establish a pool of shared experiences and best practices.

Majed summarized PD sessions as follows: "They occur once a month and focus on best shared practices." Participants remarked that this sort of professional development fundamentally "depended on principals' experiences of best practices" and was lacking practical examples and reasoning. The best practice sharing failed to provide guidance on incorporation into another principal's specific situation. Sultan shared his experience:

> You might feel impressed with some incredible practices discussed. [However,] when you ask them how these practices work well in their schools, the principals do not know themselves! They say it just worked. No clear evidence is provided, [which is,] therefore, meaningless.

Similarly, Ali held the same perspective on how sharing best practices was a priority in PD but failed to convince principals due to a lack of supporting evidence. Newcomer principals found PD that shared best practices beneficial. Salama further emphasized this point and concluded that newer principals gained more benefit from the current PD than veteran principals who sought more rigorous and guided PD experiences to meet their specific situational needs. Shamsa added, "The informal sharing of practices might be helpful in the short term, but [is] not enough for long-term sustainability."

Cluster managers Jennifer and Maria criticized the current PD provided for principals for being "rarely applicable to the reality of principals" and that "[while] it may be effective for those with needs in those areas, not all principals benefit." They noted that the current professional development is a "one-size-fits-all" session for all principals rather than a meeting designed to respond to the existing needs of principals. This theme was manifested throughout the participants' accounts as they echoed that PD fail to address individual needs of principals.

In line with thoughts expressed by cluster managers, principals shared their frustration that PD activities did not reflect their input and interests which ultimately impacted motivation, causing many principals to refrain from active PD participation. Principals suggested that to provide powerful results, professional development sessions should be tailored around weaknesses, as identified in the evaluation results, and used as a tool to fulfill their professional goals. In addition, principals believed that cluster managers were satisfied with the focus on sharing best practices even though they had a repertoire of resources to create sustained and focused professional development sessions. This, they stated, only conjured images of "unguided activities" where principals stumbled along with "no clear goals, no focus, and no structure."

In conclusion, all principals felt they were trapped in professional development that was unfocused and informational only. They experienced "one-size-fits-all" professional development determined by someone else. Cluster managers failed to connect initiatives, such as professional goals and principal evaluation results, to create a more sustained professional development that was responsive to principal needs and relevant to their experiences and the reality of their schools.

Theme Eight: Ineffective Feedback during the Evaluation Process

The principals in this study expressed their concerns about ineffective and non-constructive feedback that they felt was often intentionally aimed at developing their leadership performance during the formative evaluation. In most cases, the feedback principals received was nothing more than simplistic comments, void of detail that could support growth. Some of the recurrent remarks principals heard from their cluster managers included "okay," "that is very good," "keep doing that," "good work," and "well done." While these comments were a sign of approval, they lacked enough detail to be of constructive value, and the words failed to recognize excellence, solve problems, or address needs. At other times, negative feedback was given to principals, again lacking the necessary depth for the recipients to grow in their professional work as a principal.

Nora described her feedback experience as being "invasive," "judgmental," and "directive." She elaborated, "They [cluster managers] would give me judgmental and directive feedback. They would tell me 'You are wrong' and then say what to do and what not to do, with no deliberate thought given to the situation." Similarly, Majed experienced negative feedback from cluster managers which made him feel more distant and less productive. Clearly, negative feedback can inflate an already stressful situation by creating rather intense and distant relationships, ultimately causing a decrease in the principal's ability to function effectively. For the most part, principals' disappointment in the attitudes of their cluster managers regarding feedback was discernible in their formative evaluation.

The lack of authentic feedback during the formative evaluation was carried over to the summative evaluation, leaving principals deflated and feeling hopeless. Majed

shared, "You are mistaken if you think you would receive a detailed report with feedback. What you get are mere statements that reflect your performance on the evaluation rubric—as simple as that." The principals explained that cluster managers approached feedback in the summative evaluation by telling principals to only review and use the "checked boxes" on the evaluation rubric as a basis for performance improvement. This approach was not substantial or sufficiently helpful. To understand their priorities and develop a plan for future improvement, principals need specific, informative, and developmental feedback that is effectively linked to their performance.

Only two principals mentioned that their assigned cluster managers provided constructive and detailed feedback in one of their eight years of evaluation experiences. For these two principals, the positive experience was short-lived, because those cluster mangers transferred to other locations. Sultan shared his experience receiving worthwhile feedback:

She [the primary cluster manager] scheduled a meeting after the summative evaluation. In the meeting, we walked through the rubric and ratings again…took time talking about what I would have done wrong...how I would have done things differently. The session was great, helpful. It made me reflect on things, realize things, [and] feel comfortable. It helped clarify how to focus my intentions and how to move up to the next level—to select goals and the right actions to do so.

Sultan concluded that when feedback and guidance was delivered in detail, principals were less likely to be deceived by unclear behavioral summaries. As a result, principals were more likely to be prepared to articulate new intentions, formulate aligned professional goals, and take corrective actions. Majed agreed that having set,

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individualized feedback sessions established the performance territory of principals to be

explored, discussed, and reflected—all of which help them focus their "intentions and

how to move up to the next level." The principals generally considered feedback a vital

component for their career progression and as such would be an enhancement in the

evaluation process.

The findings from the cluster manager cases were not incongruent with those of

the principals. While Jennifer acknowledged inconsistencies in delivering feedback, she

felt that she engaged her principals in conversation, rather than providing effective

feedback in the formative process. She stated, "I am constantly working with them, but I

do not think the conversations that we have are feedback." Approaching feedback

differently, Benner and Maria placed emphasis on the notion that feedback was

"continuous" and lasted to the very end of the year. Both cluster managers set

appointments with their principals to establish a "timely schedule" for feedback, slotted

between trimesters, to ensure principals were on track to achieve their specific learning

goals.

All cluster managers claimed that they offered "detailed feedback" during the

summative evaluation to individual principals. This feedback was derived from the

ongoing observations, interactions, and examinations of their leadership practices

throughout the year and was later included in the final evaluation meeting. Yet, these

meetings were considered "voluntary sessions," requested by the principals when they

did not understand their evaluation results, or they wanted more information on how to

improve from one performance level to the next for the subsequent year. Jennifer,

Benner, and Maria all explicitly stated that they scheduled additional meetings or follow-

up sessions with principals to further discuss their performance. However, such was "rarely requested."

In conclusion, most principals described the feedback given by their cluster managers as simplistic comments deprived of details and quality during the formative process. Even worse, no feedback was embedded into the summative meeting; only a review of checked boxes on the evaluation results was recommended as a guide to help principals improve their performance.

Principals sought meaningful feedback from their cluster managers that was specific, informative, and developmental in nature to guide them toward improved leadership behaviors. Although overemphasizing their delivery of detailed feedback to principals in the summative evaluation, the cluster managers seemed to do so only when their principals specifically requested it. However, they gave little thought to whether other principals needed such feedback, despite their silence.

Theme Nine: Emerging Tensions at the Summative Evaluation

Data analysis revealed that the existence of tensions between principals and their cluster managers at the summative meeting impacted the reliability and validity of the principal evaluation. The emerging tensions expressed by the participants stemmed from various sources: the absence of primary cluster managers during the evaluation process, the involvement of secondary cluster managers, the unsystematic and unreliable methods of evaluation, and the influence of school evaluation performance on the principal evaluation. These tensions varied in degree depending on the cluster managers involved in the summative evaluation.

The principals frequently stressed the importance of cluster mangers' visibility during the formative evaluation, a practice that should capture a "comprehensive picture" of their performance. Many principals felt it was unfair that some cluster managers were "absent" during the entire evaluation process but present to evaluate their performance at the final meeting. Principal Majed elucidated that cluster managers who were not entirely committed to supervising principals could not effectively capture valid snapshots of the principals' work in school buildings, rendering them unable to provide a valid judgment in the final evaluation.

All cluster managers underlined that providing "visibility" during the formative process to allow them "to form a complete picture of their principal's individual performance" was key to giving justice to principals at the summative evaluation. Maria stated that solid cluster managers pursued observation and recording of facts and reliable information during the formative evaluation segment to further augment their objectivity in the final evaluation. Likewise, Jennifer explained that charting principals' learning and progression from day one was essential to guaranteeing a fair evaluation in the end.

Some principals reported that their evaluation outcomes appeared to be based on how the cluster managers positioned themselves in the context of their own peers. In such cases, the cluster managers feared that ratings given to principals should not have been so high as to "create conflict with their fellows." Shamsa stated that "an underlying coercive obligation to keep balanced scoring across principal evaluations existed," as evidenced by her experiences in summative evaluations over eight years and speculation circulated among school principals. The idea that such a conspiracy occurred among cluster managers, and the knowledge that even with compelling evidence individual principals

were powerless to affect change on their own evaluations, created significant tension between evaluators, those being evaluated, and the evaluation process itself.

Addressing the presumed conspiracy, Jennifer disclosed that cluster managers were split on their processes and outcomes for principal evaluation:

There is a split camp [among cluster managers], in that there are some 'hard-liner' cluster managers who say if you rated them good year after year, you cannot have a hope of really getting rid of them…which is true. And there is another camp that says you cannot get rid of them anyway so, what is the point? I try to get some sort of combination and try to salvage…relationships to get the best out of them.

From Jennifer's response, it is evident that cluster managers were divided in their perceptions and expectations regarding individual principal evaluations—half were inclined to lower ratings while half favored higher ratings. Jennifer herself attempted to avoid "high" or "low ratings" as a means of preserving and salvaging her supervisory relationships and to avoid conflict with principals, even while recognizing that such efforts undermined the purposes of the evaluation process.

Another recurrent tension experienced by principals was the mandatory involvement of secondary cluster managers in the summative evaluations. Many principals felt that their cluster managers' opinions were diluted by the input of secondary cluster managers who had little-to-no experience or interaction with the principals themselves. This was especially obvious to the principals under evaluation, who noted that secondary cluster managers "made deliberate efforts to lower [their] performance," even when such efforts were at odds with the findings of the primary

evaluators. Sultan provided an example demonstrating that despite solid evidence and a supportive primary cluster manager his ratings had been revised to a lower score:

> My primary cluster manager was compelled by my performance at certain criteria and rated me high, but the secondary cluster [manager] believed otherwise and kept spinning on this rating as if his purpose was to get me down no matter what. The evidence I brought was convincing for my primary cluster [manager], but not for the secondary. Eventually, they revised the rating score to a lower level.

Sultan resented the mandatory inclusion of what was intended to be a "non-biased professional" because he felt that the secondary cluster manager lacked the expertise and firsthand experience necessary to evaluate his performance. Secondary cluster managers are often viewed as "invisible" in the schools of the principals they evaluate, and their input is seen as less reliable because it is based on "a single visit lasting no more than two hours." Salama adamantly argued that unavailable secondary cluster managers in the formative evaluation should lose the privilege of having a voice at the summative evaluation.

The unofficial inclusion of the school evaluation report and its influence in the principal evaluation was an additional area of contention for principals. Nora and Shamsa expressed frustration that their cluster managers were influenced by their poor school evaluation reports and thereby disregarded the principals' leadership efforts and growth documented in the formative and summative evaluations. Nora's cluster managers rationalized assigning her lower grades based on her poor school evaluation score claiming, "How could someone possibly get high scores in one area of the evaluation while simultaneously getting lower points in that same area in the school evaluation?"

Many principals believed that the school evaluation was not necessarily a reflection of their performance but often a combination of mitigating circumstances beyond their immediate control. Shamsa expressed her concern that despite her well-executed leadership practices and considerable efforts made during the school year, her students still performed poorly on high-stakes tests and school progress reports. For this reason, before assigning a score on related criteria, cluster managers should consider all relevant "variables," including the length of principals' stay in a school and students' prior academic performance.

Furthermore, Shamsa added that despite student achievement as a vital component within the principal evaluation, the lack of clear scoring criteria allowed variance in weight assignment as cluster managers used their own discretion. "If your student achievement is high, your score will be high. It is not about the exact growth made between last year and the current year," she asserted. Cluster managers must have definitive systematic method for student achievement weight assignment to ensure fair judgment and impact in the principal evaluation.

The limited objectivity in the work of both primary and secondary evaluators was cited by principals as "a problem with the process" involved in summative evaluation. They expressed that outcomes of the summative evaluation were "unsystematic" and "biased," leading them to avoid authentic discussion, whether about their own performance or their scores received at the final evaluation. Similar concerns that the summative evaluation "relied heavily on hunches and … moods and were darkened because of the unsystematic methods and random practices" were also voiced.

Ali pointed out that every cluster manager had different perspectives regarding "evaluation expectations, criteria, and even the growth…made." Ali noted that what one cluster manager considered real growth was not necessarily considered such by another cluster manager. As a result, some principals reported feelings of "ambivalence" toward the summative assessment results while others were often "dissatisfied." Few felt "satisfied." Until uniform guidelines are developed for cluster managers where they set clear and consistent evaluation expectations and procedures, tensions will continue to emerge and persist.

In conclusion, tensions in the evaluation process derive from critical areas and affect both cluster managers' expectations and principals' outcomes. When these tensions emerge, they swing the evaluation from its purpose and detract from its quality—making it unfair, unreliable, and invalid. The cluster managers' approach to the evaluation process is pivotal and must be transparent for principals to take the evaluation seriously. Therefore, to recognize the process as a valuable undertaking, it must be better represented by knowledgeable and competent cluster managers capable to addressing these tensions and ensuring a quality learning experience with a fair outcome.

Theme Ten: Lack of Incentive and Punitive Measures in Principal Evaluations

The principal evaluation process was not used as a tool to reward or punish high and low performance. It had no impact. The outcome of the principal evaluation process likewise was void of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and lacked punitive measures for those principals who did not meet minimum requirements.

While principals do receive a direct incentive in the form of a "promotion," it was not dependent on the principal evaluation process but was channeled through the school

evaluation. According to participants, ADEC reviewed the annual reports generated by Irtiqa inspectors who evaluated every school in the region. The principals whose school evaluations revealed consecutive scores of "high performance" had the chance to become "executive principals," a job similar to that of cluster manager. However, participants noted that the school evaluation was completely different from the principal evaluation, but they reiterated their desire for ADEC to initiate a partial incentive program that was closely connected to principal evaluation performance.

The participants felt their evaluations treated all school principals "the same," with no baseline that differentiated "excellent and poor performance." Since the inception of evaluation, principals attested that the evaluation failed to honor principals who received "very good" or "excellent" scores on their individual evaluations. Sultan shared, "I did not hear principals were rewarded for their performance. Principals who showed excellent performance were not given a reward." These sentiments were echoed throughout individual cases where all principals were treated the same, even after their evaluation results demonstrated significant disparity in principals' skills.

A major criticism by all participants is the lack of simple "praise" in the process. For instance, Salama felt her hard effort was "worthless" and went "unnoticed," no matter how hard she strived to accomplish excellence in her individual evaluation performance. Similarly, Majed expressed disappointment when his effort was diminished: "I cannot imagine working hard all year to improve not only myself, but the school, and at the end I receive nothing, not even a simple praise for my effort[s]." For these principals, such simple praise would demonstrate "appreciation and encouragement," "sustain motivation," and "promote self-worth."

Like principals, cluster managers held similar beliefs and emphasized the benefits of a built-in incentive system to increase motivation and fuel the energy and commitment of principals. Benner explicitly called for ADEC "to motivate its principals as they [made] progress toward improving leadership performance in their yearly summative evaluation." The lack of incentives might lead to decreased principal motivation, commitment, and energy, especially when the evaluation system is not able to distinguish between skilled and low-performing principals. Case in point, even when principals repeatedly show low performance or no growth, they remain in their positions because the evaluation is not bound by measures to support improvement or to remove an underperforming principal.

Because punitive measures were not embedded in the evaluation system, participants felt they were not likely to take their evaluation seriously. In fact, principals appear to not care about their performance results because they know they knew they were "protected" and could not be "dismissed." As described by participants, no "suspension," "improvement plan," "termination," "early retirement," "warnings," or other types of punitive measures were initiated for those showing persistently low-performance. Nora commented, "No examples can be found of principals who have been dismissed or disciplined because of poor performance."

Cluster managers clarified that they had no say in the final decisions pertaining to consequences for ineffective principals; but rather, it was a decision that came from ADEC officials. Benner illustrated that "low-performing principals [were] flagged," and their careers were probably determined later. Yet, Benner never saw termination applied to any principals during his time as a cluster manager. Additionally, regardless of their

wide agreement on applying consequences, the participants believed the evaluation process was heavily subjective and completely reliant on biased reviews due to the absence of reliable data and assessment metrics. The participants expressed it was incapable of issuing high-stakes decisions, such as "compensation," "promotion," or "termination."

Linking principal evaluation to high-stakes employment decisions is paramount. Yet, it warrants many considerations, such as fairness, meaningfulness, and its ability to achieve the purposes for which it was established. Many principals and cluster managers acknowledged that the evaluation process was complex and objective judgment and fairness necessitated a sound evaluation capable of identifying and rewarding accurate performance, while punishing those who showed no improvement in a reasonable time. Finding from this study indicate that ADEC needs to overhaul issues inherent in the evaluation system before "high-stakes decisions can be made."

In the end, the principal evaluation does not reward or punish principals for their performance. Rewards come from school performance evaluation. Participants expressed the need for an incentive system to sustain motivation and commitment and to initiate punitive measures to take evaluation and improvement seriously. In view of these urgent needs, participants suggested that ADEC repair the deep-seated defects and flaws inherent in the current evaluation system.

Case Summary

Following within-case and cross-case analyses, several themes were apparent in the data and are paraphrased as follows: (1) cluster managers have significant impact on the direction of the evaluation quality; (2) the evaluation criteria have inherent

problematic defects; (3) embedded supervision is more focused on school management than instructional leadership; (4) inconsistent supervisory approaches exist among cluster managers; (5) several types of cluster manger hinder learning; (6) exceptional cluster managers promote learning and development; (7) the professional development conducted is fragmented and unfocused; (8) the feedback received in the evaluation process is ineffective; (9) emerging tensions occur at the summative evaluation; and (10) the lack of incentive and punitive measures in principal evaluations is problematic.

The closing chapter will further expound on the discussion of this analysis and situate the findings with respect to the literature based on principal supervision and evaluation examined in Chapter Two. Additionally, the implications for research, policy, and practice will be presented.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Research on the principalship which underscores the roles and responsibilities of school principals has shifted significantly over the last three decades (Catano & Stronge, 2007; Stronge, 1993; Whitaker, 2003; Zepeda, 2013). The research spotlights the transition of principals' roles from management and oversight to instructional leadership primarily responsible for student achievement (Cascadden, 1998; Lyons, 1999; Normore, 2004; Zepeda et al., 2017). With such enormous change, school districts could benefit from adopting a robust and sound evaluation system capable of accurately gauging the effectiveness of principal performance with the aspiration to determine the necessary professional development to ensure high-quality instructional leadership among all school leaders (Parylo et al., 2012; Stronge, 2013a).

A robust and sound evaluation system cannot flourish as a stand-alone entity but requires inspired, well-versed, and dedicated evaluators to navigate and mentor principal learning (Goldring et al., 2018; Zepeda & Lanoue, 2017). Even so, given the dearth of research on leadership evaluation and supervision (Davis et al., 2011; Goldring et al., 2009; Parylo et al., 2012; Zepeda et al., 2016) —with no such research in the United Arab Emirates—this study examined the current principal evaluation processes and supervisory practices in the second largest school district in the emirate of Abu Dhabi: Al-Ain.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the principal evaluation processes and supervisory practices that cluster managers (evaluators) and principals follow throughout the academic year. It explored the perspectives of principals and cluster managers on principal evaluation practices and the nature of supervision provided to boost learning. The three targeted aspects of this topic were the principal evaluation process provided for current administrators; supervision as a means for supporting and improving school leaders; and the extent of learning and growth as manifested in the evaluative supervisory processes and practices.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. How is the principal evaluation process conducted as described and experienced by public school principals in Al-Ain city?

2. What are the supervisory approaches selected by cluster managers in the principal evaluation process?

3. In what ways do the supervisory approaches employed by cluster managers help principals sustain growth and development?

To address these questions, the researcher incorporated the constant comparative method to examine and analyze the participants' perceptions of their current principal evaluation system and the level of supervision implemented in the region. This chapter provides a brief summary of the research design, positions the findings of this study in relation to the literature on principal evaluation and supervision, and suggests possible implications for policy, practice, and future research. Concluding thoughts about the study are provided at the end of this chapter.

Summary of Research Design

This study was structured within the interpretive framework of constructivism, which rests on the notion that individuals gain insights by exploring the richness, depth, and complexity of a given phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Constructivism veers away from predetermined frameworks and adopts a more flexible research style capable of capturing varied meanings in human interaction to allow the researcher and participants to make sense of what is perceived as reality (Black, 2006). Additionally, the epistemology of constructivism is socially, not objectively oriented (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Hirschman, 1985). As a result, the participants of this study (including the researcher) were interdependent and reciprocally interactive throughout the research process, as Hudson and Ozanne (1988) suggested.

The conceptual framework of this study drew from developmental supervision (Glickman et al., 2017; Zepeda, 2017), differentiated supervision (Glatthorn, 1990), and adult learning theories (Conlan et al., 2003; Knowles, 1984; Langer & Applebee, 1986). In the field of education, developmental supervision pertaining to teachers has been researched most extensively (Glickman et al., 2017; Siens & Ebmeier, 1996). However, Zepeda et al. (2014, 2016) applied the precepts of developmental supervision to leader evaluation. These concepts assisted the researcher in framing the themes that emerged from the within-case and cross-case analyses.

Qualitative methods were the appropriate choice for this research study because it sought to understand what Al-Ain school principals thought about their current practices in relation to the evaluation process; the type of supervisory approaches selected by cluster managers; and whether they promoted sustained growth and development.

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Qualitative methods have the potential to answer 'what,' 'why,' and 'how' research questions (Ritchie et al., 2014) and provide an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by deeply examining how they make sense of their social and material circumstances, experiences, perspectives, and histories.

This qualitative study was broadly framed within the research design of a case study (Merriam, 1998; Simon, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014) and situated in the context of the Al-Ain school district, which is supervised by the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC). The primary purpose for choosing a case study methodology was its ability to facilitate exploration of specific phenomena within its context by using multiple data sources to ensure that issues are not being examined through just a single lens (Merriam, 1998). Essentially, the type of case study design selected for this study was a multi-case design that enabled the researcher to examine closely multiple cases within a single context. Moreover, this multi-case study was largely classified as descriptive, focused, and detailed because it presented a full, rich explanation of each phenomenon within the boundaries of its context (DeVaus, 2001).

In any case study, the case and units of analysis are important to identify. According to Yin (2014), the tentative definition of the case and units of analysis are closely determined by the research questions designed for the study. With that as purpose, each case in the multi-case design was defined as a school principal or cluster manager with a total number of nine cases—six principals and three cluster managers. The units of analysis focused on the evaluation processes and supervisory practices that each case experienced during the principal evaluation process.

This study relied on several data collection methods, namely face-to-face interviews, document review and analysis (artifacts), and field notes for triangulation, all leading to data saturation (Hakim, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). In addition, within-case and cross-case analyses applied the constant comparative method to examine the collected data. First, a within-case analysis was used to illuminate each case in-depth as a stand-alone entity. Then, a cross-case analysis was used to examine and refine themes, similarities, and differences across all cases (Patton, 2015). Finally, themes were generated to assist in presenting and discussing the results of the data analyses.

Before embarking on the study, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to inform and ground the researcher's perspective. Initially, the review focused on essential information pertaining to the importance of principal supervision and evaluation for leadership and the critical theories that were most effective when incorporated in the evaluative processes and supervisory practices. Toward the end of the process, however, the literature review shifted to examine more globally-related studies associated with principal supervision and evaluation. Each segment of the literature provided the researcher with valuable assistance regarding the design, implementation, analysis, and discussion of the current study.

Discussion of Findings

As the purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of principals and cluster managers on principal evaluation practices and the subsequent nature of supervision provided to boost learning, this discussion will first briefly summarize the major findings or themes, and then analyze those findings considering current and seminal literature.

Theme One: Cluster Managers Cause Inequality in the Evaluation Process

Participants identified cluster managers as the major driving force behind either elevation or demotion in the quality of the principal evaluation process. They described the evaluation process as "wavering in quality" or "unbalanced," ostensibly swinging from "poor" to "excellent" and vice versa. This scenario was expressed repeatedly regarding the inception of the principal evaluation system and participants noted that variations in the evaluation process resulted from the different supervisory practices, experiences, roles, and expectations of cluster managers. In fact, recent studies asserted that principal supervisors shape the quality of the principal evaluation and supervision through their experiences and levels of fidelity to its implementation and procedures (Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012; Hvidston et al., 2016; Kimball et al., 2009).

Additionally, study participants pointed out that the lack of clear guidelines and professional development made the work of cluster managers more challenging, compelling them to rely solely on their past experiences and prior knowledge. This finding is not surprising as many studies emphasized the creation of formal guidelines to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of principal supervisors and provide a framework to keep them within the narrow focus of highest priorities (Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012).

As a supplementary component during the evaluation process, participants called for continuous professional development efforts to maintain evaluation quality across cluster managers, which provided enhancement for practice—the intellectual and practical nourishment of supervising and evaluating skills. These statements supported the literature review findings that more attention is required to provide professional

development for cluster managers as a necessary precursor to, and essential component of, effective quality supervision and evaluation for school principals (Casserly et al., 2013; Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig, 2012). Efficacious professional development efforts are well-developed, planned, and seamless sessions that help cluster managers develop effective thinking skills in leading and managing schools. Such sessions for principals build their knowledge base and enable them to support, guide, and teach school leaders in more powerful and meaningful ways.

Theme Two: Evaluation Criteria: Aligned, yet Unclear, Universal, and Impractical

Another major theme that resonated among study participants was the alignment of evaluation criteria with the professional standards of principals, to reflect their core leadership work and responsibilities, namely "leading strategically," "leading teaching and learning," "leading people," "leading the organization," and "leading the community." Participants revealed that such standards were apparent in the behavioral summaries of each criterion and distributed onto a trajectory performance scale, ranging from the lowest performance level, "pre-foundation," to the highest, and "exemplary." These results supported studies by Fuller et al. (2015) and Catano and Stronge (2007), which concluded that an important connection should be made between criteria and the daily work of principals to evaluate the alignment of their end-task product with evaluation objectives and process goals.

Despite parallel alignment and cohesiveness, many study participants articulated that evaluation criteria were unclear, universal, and impractical, and created unnecessary tension and conflict during the formative and summative evaluations. Principals expressed confusion created by inadequate information on the evaluation rubric and

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articulated their frustration with the inconsistent interpretations made by their cluster managers. Several principals revealed that each cluster manager provided different interpretations and examples for the same criterion, which negatively impacted the evaluation performance of the principals.

No related studies were found that focused on supervisors' differing interpretations of evaluation criteria. Nonetheless, multiple studies emphasized the need for reconciliation and unity regarding the overall expectations, purposes, and practices between supervisors and principals to avoid unintended negative consequences in the evaluation process (Davis et al., 2011; Goldring et al., 2009; Harrison & Peterson, 1986; Thomas et al., 2000).

Participants in this study considered the current evaluation criteria as one-size-fits-all for all principals. While this cookie-cutter rubric might have worked for some of the region's principals, it compromised others by not accounting for their differences and local variables (school cycles, geographical location of schools, student population, number of teachers, teaching curriculum, and the availability of resources and materials) thus requiring flexibility and responsiveness to accommodate and respond to such differences. This finding mirrored the study of Fathi (1995), who found that evaluation was unfair when no emphasis was placed on school differences (i.e., grade level, location, level of poverty, student population, culture, and tradition). As a result, Fathi (1995) suggested that principal supervisors be more flexible and considerate when supervising and evaluating principals.

Another critical issue addressed by most participants was the impracticality of some evaluation criteria, which they perceived as unrealistic and unattainable. For

instance, despite active participation in the process, many principals struggled to achieve the "exemplary performance" level for some criteria. This result supported the study by Amsterdam, Johnson, Monrad, and Tonnsen (2005), which concluded that establishing clear-cut and achievable criteria would help principals enhance their understanding of each criterion and increase their trust in the evaluation system.

Theme Three: Insufficient Focus on Instructional Leadership

All participants acknowledged significant changes in the evaluation purposes, criteria, professional standards, and instruments—reflecting their new roles and responsibilities within the realm of instructional leadership. Many principals noted that the supervision embedded in the process focused more on administrative duties than instructional leadership. They believed that most cluster managers supervised with more focus on "standardized exams," "new legislation," "school finance," and "parent and teacher complaints" rather than a complete focus on instructional leadership practices. Moreover, only a few principals experienced supervision enacted by "exceptional" cluster managers who emphasized instructional leadership areas by shadowing principals in their classrooms, discussing observations and instructional practices, collecting and analyzing student data, and monitoring school progress in various ways during the evaluation process.

Cluster managers could contribute more effectively by consciously allocating time in their supervision tasks for instructional leadership practices, even if only to improve the core heart of teaching and learning within the school. Aldaoud (2008) and Yavuz (2010) concluded that no benefits could be earned from supervision when the deliberate intentions of supervisors revolved solely around the administrative matters of

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their schools. Furthermore, with the current educational system anchored in accountability and high-stakes standards, the roles of principals have shifted from school management to instructional leadership—expanding and becoming more complex and demanding (Fink, 2010; Parylo et al., 2012).

There is a widespread consensus on the ability of instructional leadership to increase and sustain the quality of teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Louis et al., 2010). In addition, researchers agree that thriving educationally in the 21st century necessitates that school leaders demonstrate strong skills and expertise in instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Zepeda et al., 2016). In that sense, supervision embedded in the evaluation system is unlikely to be considered legitimate or helpful if it is not invested in instructional leadership, an area that has a potent influence on teaching and learning across schools.

Theme Four: Inconsistent Supervisory Approaches

Throughout the evaluation process, principals described the supervisory approaches employed by cluster managers as inconsistent and inappropriate for their developmental levels, causing confusion and impeding learning and development. Equally important, the lack of thought and care in matching the supervisory approaches to each respective principal eroded the value of "feedback" and "trust" in the supervisory relationship. In fact, principals shared that every time newly assigned cluster managers took charge of supervision, they failed to link their supervisory approach and plans to those of former cluster managers. This signaled "randomness" and "carelessness" that negatively impacted the implementation and quality of their supervision.

As described by principal participants, some of their assigned cluster managers used a "directive approach" that entailed "giving orders [and] instructions [about] what to do." Others used a "collaborative approach" that involved "exchanging ideas and expertise in conversations." Yet, a third type used a "non-directive approach," enabling principals to take the lead in problem-solving and decision-making, which ultimately led to professional growth and trust in the evaluative process. For principals, the constant changes in supervisory approaches were overwhelming, especially for those who experienced new cluster managers annually.

The current study findings relative to the selection of supervisory approaches were surprising and oppose major findings of the recent research conducted by Parylo et al. (2012), who found the collaborative supervisory approach to be most consistent and evidential in the evaluation process where both principals and evaluators worked collaboratively in an equal-footing relationship. The potential reasons for this difference in findings were depicted by cluster managers in the current study: (1) "language deficits" that downgraded the supervisory approach and restricted it to the confines of communication in simple English; (2) "urgent situations" that required quick decisions and, therefore, a change in the supervisory approach; and (3) principals' fierce "resistance" to certain approaches that pressured cluster managers into changing their approaches. Thus, these circumstances and the restricted control of cluster managers over the situation made the selection of an appropriate supervisory approach unstable.

Theme Five: Cluster Managers Hinder Learning During the Evaluation Process

Study participants spotlighted several negative practices employed by many cluster managers during the evaluation process. They explained that the "abandonment,"

"micromanagement," and "gotcha" techniques that cluster managers employed compromised their supervisory relationships and ultimately the desired learning growth. On the receiving end, principals cast skepticism on benefits gained from embedded supervision in the evaluation process when cluster managers excluded themselves from the entire formative process, appearing only at the summative evaluation meeting to evaluate and measure the principals' performance.

In effect, the final evaluation was a snapshot unable to capture the complete picture of the principals' performance, thus a scenario devoid of sound judgment and effective guidance toward improvement. These findings supported recent literature review findings that supervisors who did not regularly allocate sufficient time to visit, monitor, and assess the performance of principals risked compromising the validity of a process intended to provide the necessary support for leadership growth in principals (Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012; Lashway, 2003). Furthermore, such supervisors were unable to address significant deficiencies in principals' practices, which inhibited school leadership improvement (Green, 2004).

Study participants noted that in addition to feeling abandoned, when school principals were mistreated and abused through "micromanagement" and "gotcha" techniques, they felt trapped by coercion and "intimidation" practices. The resulting sense of mistrust created a breakdown of supervisory relationships, productivity, and principals' willingness to participate and contribute in the evaluation process. These activities combined within the formative evaluation created an ominous tone, made the learning experience fruitless, and transformed the evaluation into a meaningless exercise. Principals who experienced these practices expressed their frustration of feeling their

work was never good enough to fulfill expectations, leaving them emotionally drained and feeling incompetent after meetings.

The review of literature found no related research on the negative attitudes of supervisors; however, several studies indicated that principal evaluation became almost meaningless when they were highly bureaucratic, perceived as one-way, or characteristic of top-down communication, where the supervisor was superior and the principal inferior (Yavuz, 2010). A shift in the role of supervisors from control-dominant to facilitator is key to guiding principals through the dynamic and generative conversations that make the process a learning opportunity where leaders engage in dialogue and reflect on their practices without fear or intimidation (Abu Risq, 2012; Parylo et al., 2012).

Theme Six: Exceptional Cluster Managers Promoting Learning and Development

As illustrated across several cases, cluster managers' attitudes, experience levels, and practices appeared to significantly influence—either positive or negative—the formation of embedded supervision in the evaluation process. Participants identified common practices employed by a select number of exceptional cluster managers that made the process a richer, more productive learning opportunity. These practices were deeply grounded in principal growth and development: (1) approaching the evaluation as an ongoing process, (2) preparing and planning for each supervisory session, (3) and providing a supportive and non-threatening learning environment to stimulate principal learning.

By perceiving evaluation as a dynamic and ongoing process, rather than a "one-time event," cluster managers can monitor the progression of principals, identify holes in their leadership practices, and provide continuous feedback for performance

improvement. This idea was reflected by the study results of Parylo et al. (2012), who found that when principal evaluation was viewed as an ongoing, dynamic, and active process, principals internalized it and felt a sense of daily evaluation. As a result, principals gave considerable effort and attention to fulfilling the needs of their individual schools (Parylo et al., 2012).

In addition to maintaining awareness of principal evaluation as an ongoing process, exceptional cluster managers approach each supervisory session with adequate preparation, specific goals, and activities outlined in advance. Furthermore, they examine and review notes and other data prior to meeting with principals. Effective supervision necessitates preparation to yield profound results. Discovering similar findings on this same point, Goldring et al. (2018) revealed that when principal supervisors thought meticulously about ways to document their supervisory work with each assigned principal and arrive at mechanisms for creating coherence form one supervisory visit to the next, the evaluation process gained meaningful value and considerable benefits. The practice of anchoring supervision to a seamless continuum that served the purposes of the evaluation process is a noted benefit expressed by study participants and documented by Goldring et al. (2018).

Supplementing their carefully crafted supervision, exceptional cluster managers had the presence of mind to establish a safe and supportive environment where supervisory sessions could be held to meet the needs of principals. This finding aligned with the study results of Parylo et al. (2012), who found that supportive environments increased the level of comfort for principals, nurtured a sense of trust, and fostered the development of supportive relationships—all of which channeled to increase principal

effectiveness (Youngs & King, 2002). Similarly, the current study found that without a safe and supportive environment, reflective dialogues and discussions ceased to emerge, supervisory relationship collapsed, and positive learning experiences fell beyond attainment.

Theme Seven: Fragmented and Unfocused Professional Development

In some cases, participants perceived the professional development embedded in the evaluation process as superficial and unorganized, providing little benefit to the professional growth to school principals. They expressed that the limited focus of professional development on shared best practices, individual and collective needs, producing meaningful learning experiences, and other initiatives (professional goals, evaluation, etc.) contributed to the overall sense of mistrust in the evaluative process. Additionally, they noted that supplementary professional development in the evaluation process was "one-size-fits-all," "unfocused," and "informational only," with no relevance to their school needs and realities, leaving them questioning both the intent and the value of the time spent away from their primary concern—the school and those entrusted to their leadership.

The findings of this study regarding professional development were not aligned with the conclusions of similar recent studies that stressed the shift of professional learning of principals was targeted, contextualized, ongoing, and job-embedded (Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005; Ross, 2011; Zepeda et al., 2014). Additionally, the monthly professional development described across the Al-Ain district referred to the traditional "sit-and-get" model, which focused heavily on feeding principals information that was handed down through success stories and best practices. Subsequently, they were

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encouraged to transfer and implement such practices in their schools to make positive changes districtwide.

The gaps between the professional development findings of the current study and those mentioned in the literature review were not surprising because of absent adult learning principles and their applications to planning, designing, and executing professional development. Zepeda et al. (2014) strongly called for the incorporation of adult learning principles as prerequisites to designing professional development to further enrich learning experiences and opportunities for principals. When key adult learning principles and features are embedded in professional development and training programs, school leaders' motivation to learn and participate in the process increases, while cynicism and detachment decrease.

Theme Eight: Ineffective Feedback During the Evaluation Process

Principal participants voiced their concerns about feedback received at several checkpoints in their formative and summative evaluations. Most of the time, they described it as "shallow," "useless," and "simplistic," deprived of constructive details that could support growth and encourage behavioral change in leadership practices. Other times, they described the feedback as "judgmental," "directive," and "negative," inflating a stressful situation by creating intense and distant supervisory relationships, which eventually led to a decrease in their ability to respond and function effectively.

Feedback intended to improve the leadership practices of principals is often limited, and there is little or no strategically structured or meaningful professional learning dialogue that encourages continual engagement in reflective practices to stimulate actions and thinking. Such engagement serves to transform instructional

leadership performance for the better. This finding mirrors the results of multiple studies

that revealed principal evaluations failed to provide constructive and specific feedback

targeting individual needs, capturing strengths and weaknesses in performance, or acting

as a guide to further the development of principal leadership capacities (Portin et al.,

2006; Reeves, 2009; Goldring et al., 2009).

Hvidston et al. (2016) found that for supervision to be effective, it had to include

specific feedback in the evaluation process pertaining to the instructional practices of

principals and offer a reflective learning opportunity for them to consider their leadership

practices. On a similar note, Abu Risq (2012) underscored the importance of supervisors

to guide principals through dynamic discussions during the evaluation process. Even

Parylo et al. (2012) urged evaluators to make principal evaluation "a continuous,

transparent process" that promoted professional "dialogue," reinforced mutual "trust and

respect," and welcomed "constructive feedback"—each of which, in turn, would facilitate

ongoing development and provide valuable insight for helping principals become more

effective leaders of their schools in a challenging and demanding era (p. 235).

Theme Nine: Emerging Tensions at the Summative Evaluation

Participants disclosed that heightened tensions emerged between both cluster

managers and principals who gathered for the final summative evaluation meeting,

ultimately impacting the reliability and validity of the principal evaluation process. These

emerging tensions, participants agreed, originated from several sources including the

virtual abandonment by primary cluster managers during the entire formative evaluation

process, the intrusive involvement of secondary cluster managers in the summative

evaluations, the unsystematic and unreliable methods of evaluation, and the indirect

effect of school evaluation reports on the individual principal performance. Participants acknowledged that these tensions varied in degree and effect dependent on the cluster managers presiding over the summative evaluation sessions.

In light of some cluster managers' complete absence in the formative evaluation, multiple studies found in the literature stressed the necessity of investing in supervisory support and providing visibility during the formative evaluation—aimed not only at learning and shaping the leadership skills of principals (Goldring et al., 2018; Portin et al., 2006; Parylo et al., 2012; Zepeda et al., 2016), but also at forming fair and accurate pictures of individual performance at the summative evaluations (Abu Risq, 2012). Evaluation systems could generate better and more sound judgments of principal performance if principal supervisors spent more time at school sites and were "much more intentional about their work, collecting a lot more evidence, and doing a lot of coaching with the principals" (Mendels, 2017, p. 55).

As for the mandatory involvement of secondary cluster managers in the summative evaluation, many principals felt that their cluster managers' opinions in the final meeting were discredited by the input of secondary cluster managers who had almost no experience, knowledge, or interaction with the principals themselves. Secondary cluster managers are often seen as "invisible" in the schools of the principals they evaluate, and their input is either unwelcomed or viewed as less than reliable because it is grounded in "a single visit lasting no more than two hours." Unsurprisingly, no specific research found in the literature discussed the involvement of a second evaluator as a professional, unbiased expert in the discussion or an integral part of the

final evaluation. On the contrary, most research found that only one evaluator was involved in rating the performance of school principals.

The limited objectivity of cluster managers in the summative evaluation was addressed by principals as a "major problem with the process." As cited by the participants, individual cluster managers employed different methods of approaching the summative evaluation, which detracted from the overall quality of the principal evaluation process. In the research conducted by Abu Risq (2012), Honig (2012), and Yavuz (2010), supervisors not having systematic methods and procedures in the final evaluation led to unfairness regarding principal performance. Principal evaluators should utilize streamlined systems (Goldring et al., 2018) and employ multiple data sources to obtain a more accurate and comprehensive picture of principal performance (Brown-Sims, 2010; Micheaux & Parvin, 2018; Thomas et al., 2000).

The final and perhaps most critical tension that emerged at the summative evaluation was the negative impact of school evaluations on the principal evaluation performance. Many principal participants expressed concern that their students' achievement levels and school evaluations eclipsed their well-accomplished leadership practices throughout the academic year. In some cases, this impacted their individual evaluations and significantly lowered their scores. A few studies in the literature concurred that principal evaluations and school evaluations were divided at the summative evaluation.

For instance, Zepeda et al. (2014) found that some principals received high ratings on their individual evaluations, yet low school performance scores. The authors also found that the opposite occurred: principals received a lower rating on their evaluations

while receiving higher scores on their school evaluations. To mitigate such issues, evaluators should place themselves in a position to drill deeper into numerous data sources (including student data) available from schools to find the root causes for gaps and consider all contextual variables (e.g., the length of principals' stay in a school) (Zepeda et al., 2014).

Theme Ten: Lack of Incentive and Punitive Measures in Principal Evaluations

All study participants expressed that the principal evaluation process was not designed as a tool for rewarding or punishing high or low performance with no intentional purpose to do so. Moreover, ADEC failed to distinguish between various performance ratings and defaulted to treating all school principals fundamentally the same, with no differentiation between "excellent" and "poor" performance, leaving principal participants feeling their hard efforts were "worthless" and went "unnoticed." This finding was not unexpected since many studies found in the literature asserted that most principal evaluation systems lacked meaningful rewards, incentives, or consequences based on the grounds of annual efficiency ratings (Andrews, 1990; Reeves, 2009).

Along with the fact that all participants called for making the evaluation system a tool to reward and punish on the basis of the annual evaluation performance of principals, many believed the evaluation process implemented in the Al-Ain district was too biased, subjective, and not rigorous enough for high-stakes decisions, such as "compensation," "promotion," or "termination." Recent publications from the literature corroborated such findings and added that many principal evaluations were not accurate, valid, or reliable enough to capture the real performance of principals or make high-stakes decisions

(Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014; Fuller et al., 2015; Grissom et al., 2015). These findings further emphasized the urgent need for ADEC to fix the principal evaluation system rather than retain the flawed current model.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for further research, policies, and practices to establish robust evaluation processes in environments suitable for effective supervision aimed at improving the quality of school leadership and, by extension, elevating the core functions of teaching and learning within schools. The major implications are presented in this section.

Implications for Further Research

Aspiring principals remain at the apex of the school organizational structure, primarily navigating and channeling efforts in ways that can improve schools. However, scholars in the research community concur that student learning is only indirectly influenced by principals (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Robinson et al., 2008; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). Nevertheless, their orchestrated mission is vital to ensuring that schools are highly functioning, productive, competitive, and successful. At the same time, leading scholarly journals indicate that research published on principal evaluation and supervision has sparse coverage and fails in comparison with publications on teacher supervision and evaluation. More research is needed that encapsulates deeper and varied characteristics of principal evaluation and supervision.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the principal evaluation process and supervisory practices that cluster managers (evaluators) and principals follow throughout the academic year. It also examined the perspectives of principals and cluster managers

on said principal evaluation practices and the nature of corresponding supervision provided them. While this study was conducted in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi—specifically Al-Ain City—a richer study is warranted to compare and contrast multiple districts or zones across the other six emirates supervised by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to gauge the professional growth opportunities yielded within the various principal evaluation processes.

A comparative study would allow a prospective researcher to assess different evaluation processes and supervisory practices across all seven emirates, capturing a glimpse of best practices and processes throughout the United Arab Emirates. The researcher could then identify successfully implemented practices and those practices having the most significant impact on principal growth and development. Following this recommendation, district leaders and authorities working for ADEC (along with MOE) might begin to formulate a stronger and sounder toolbox underscoring key practices and processes to illuminate the path for establishing a robust principal evaluation system.

Another recommendation of this study is to focus on the areas of professional growth and development gained from the principal evaluation processes that promoted student achievement. For instance, the researcher found significant growth in instructional leadership skills when school principals worked with exceptional supervisors who encouraged open discussion and provided focused mentoring. This was especially true when supervision and allocated supervisory visits were dedicated to the refinement of principals' instructional leadership skills. Nonetheless, further research that focuses on the link between the principal evaluation process and student learning can

potentially define which processes best stimulate student learning and teacher development.

An additional recommendation for future studies is to explore the work of cluster managers (principal supervisors) throughout the evaluation process. Since this study recruited only three cluster manager participants, a larger sample pool would bring additional insights and generate a deeper understanding of the various aspects surrounding the formative and summative dimensions of the principal evaluation process. Furthermore, many principal participants identified emerging conflicts during these polarized, yet interconnected segments, which negatively impacted the entire process. So, how can cluster managers best avoid conflict in their role of supervisor in the formative process and that of evaluator in the summative? The answer(s) to this question may not only synthesize key supervisory practices and techniques to circumvent conflict, but also enhance the present understanding of large-scale formative (supervision) and summative (assessment) evaluation systems for both school leaders and cluster managers.

Implications for Policy

A growing number of studies have suggested that states and districts should create clear roles and responsibilities for principal supervisors that are completely harmonized with the work of school principals (Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012; Honig et al., 2010; Honig & Rainey, 2014). This study found that unclear supervisory roles and expectations of cluster managers created haphazard practices in the evaluation process which contributed to the wavering quality of principal evaluation. Without clear roles or guidelines to navigate the evaluation process, cluster managers were limited to a vague collection of general tasks listed in their job descriptions

(Goldring et al., 2018). This, in turn, exacerbated the already complex and difficult tasks of the principal evaluation process.

As echoed in the findings, ADEC fails to help cluster managers meet the immense challenge of supervising and evaluating principals based on their leadership performance. However, considering the urgency of this challenge, ADEC policy makers could formulate and develop for cluster managers a new set of professional standards that clearly reflect the functional needs of principals. Doing so would transform the work of principals and enhance the quality of their principalship. In addition, the creation of professional standards would enable ADEC to elevate the roles of cluster managers by keeping them focused and accountable to help principals improve the core areas of teaching and learning. Such an approach would be more efficient than the current practice of letting random practices control the process and constitute a major milestone for the region's evaluation process.

Aside from developing clear standards for cluster managers, establishing a high-stakes system of consequences in the principal evaluation process would not only improve the overall process, but would also encourage ambitious standards for all participants. A system of this nature would honor high-achieving principals who worked diligently to improve their leadership performance throughout the year and admonish low-achieving principals who failed repeatedly over consecutive years. In contrast, throughout individual and collective cases, the current evaluation system is unable to distinguish between effective and ineffective principals, thereby treating everyone the same which ultimately diminishes and negates the purpose of the process.

With incentives and punitive measures directly linked to individual evaluation performance, ADEC could more effectively motivate principals to strive toward performance excellence, encourage accountability, and cause them to take their leadership more seriously. However, the system would need to be valid and reliable to avoid undesirable consequences (Fuller et al., 2015). Therefore, issuing such a policy might take time and cost for ADEC to overhaul the defective issues inherent in the current evaluation system and seek objective performance data along with assessment metrics proven to be valid and reliable. The present study concluded that the current principal evaluation system is subjectively driven rather than objectively sound, and it is not rigorous enough for high-stakes decisions.

Implications for Practice

As discussed in the findings, ADEC employs a one-size-fits-all rubric for evaluating principals without considering the impact of contextual variables facing the principals being evaluated. However, school environment, geographical location, student population, available resources, length of principals' stay, leadership efforts, and students' prior academic performance all need to be captured within the vast juxtaposition of school cycles. An understanding of the impact of each variable in the daily activities of the working principal, and thus the role played in the perceived success or failure of the principal is essential. Without factoring in these differences during evaluations, tensions are more likely to emerge, which ultimately impacts the integrity, fairness, and overall quality of the principal evaluation process.

Additionally, evaluation instruments should be positioned to adequately address and meet the unique needs of individual principals—flexibility is critical. A flexible

cluster manager considering situational contexts and individualized variables can achieve fairness throughout the evaluation cycle by thoroughly examining each individual principal on a special-case basis, rather than blindly complying with the universal, one-size-fits-all rubric. In doing so, regular observations of principal interactions in the varied leadership circumstances encountered during a day, along with field supervisory visits which include open two-way communication that addresses situational variables impacting leadership growth are essential to ensure appropriate judgment at the summative evaluation.

Most of the research participants highlighted that the vulnerability of the evaluation criteria to an infinite number of interpretations created dissonance among both cluster managers and principals. This situation could be remedied through evaluation-criteria-focused workshops for each school level that seeks mutual agreement on interpretations by cluster managers and principals. Such a task would aid in establishing a lexicon of standard interpretations for evaluation criteria, which, when supported by crystalized examples and real-world scenarios, would provide principals with a better understanding of the process.

Cluster managers might consider inviting their assigned principals to engage heavily in open discussions around evaluation criteria and expectations, thus helping cluster managers improve their leadership interactions with principals. These discussions—taken from the early weeks of the evaluation process—could improve understanding an individual principal's performance against the rubric, remove any confusion, and prevent potential clashes from occurring during the formative and summative evaluations. When significant incongruence pertaining to the perceived

expectations, processes, and outcomes of evaluations exists among principals and their evaluators, the main goals and objectives stray from the desired intent and become difficult to achieve (Goldring et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2000).

Another critical matter is that evaluation criteria must be feasible and workable, and more importantly, correspond to the cultural context of the United Arab Emirates rather than blindly copycatting the experiences of other countries that lack essential common ground. As explicitly stated among the participants, when ADEC creates the evaluation rubric from scratch, they should fundamentally identify what they want their school leaders to accomplish, clearly communicate those expectations, and provide all necessary resources such as technology, budget, and time needed for the successful achievement of those established criteria.

All principals from the current study reported that the instructional leadership focus of the supervision piece was inadequate when compared to the managerial focus. However, instead of spending too much time on management or trivial matters, cluster managers ought to extend their supervision to encompass the school improvement plan and classroom instruction. Each of these is critical to polishing and refining instructional leadership practices because they are key to elevating teaching and learning within the school. Essentially, to lead effectively, school principals must move beyond exercising management practices and focus on instructional leadership practices as well (Drago-Severson, 2012; Parylo et al., 2012; Zepeda, 2014).

As voiced by the participants, the roles and responsibilities of principals have shifted drastically over the past decade. When once they were solely managers engaged in the day-to-day fiscal and oversight responsibilities of a school building, they are now

instructional leaders tasked with the growth and development of students and teaching staff alike. This highlights the need for cluster managers to act with a sense of urgency and prioritize the instructional leadership domain of principals to ensure their awareness and internalization of new roles. The formative evaluation process can be used as a powerful venue whereby cluster managers gather information about their principals to model, demonstrate, and provide valuable, differentiated, and actionable feedback to ensure principals are improving their practices as instructional leaders.

As for professional learning opportunities, participants reported that cluster managers failed to provide professional development that was coordinated, coherent, systematic, and responsive to principals' needs. On the contrary, the monthly professional development meetings were unfocused and informational only, largely based on success stories and best practices.

The majority of participants noted that the ongoing anecdotal meetings lacked substance and were examples of the district's one-size-fits-all strategies. A preferable exercise would be to include adult learning and developmental theories in the professional development plan, which would serve as helpful tools in supporting the way adults with various needs, experiences, preferences, and orientations learn and grow (Drago-Severson, 2009; Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

Zepeda et al. (2014) strongly suggested that school districts actively and consciously base their leadership professional development programs on adult learning principles for the benefit and growth obtained. Furthermore, to achieve maximum leverage and unlock the learning potential of individuals, cluster managers should use their repertoire of resources and data derived from regular supervisory visits and

cumulative evaluations to inform and create sustained and focused professional development activities relevant to principals' experiences and the realities of their schools.

Additionally, recruiting leaders who are capable and ready to serve in the position of cluster manager might be key to effectively providing the necessary support and guidance school principals need. The findings of this study concluded that cluster managers are the central cause of elevation or demotion of quality in the principal evaluation process. This is due to the different supervisory qualities, experiences, roles, and expectations that each brought to the process. Pointedly, several studies also highlighted the critical roles of principal supervisors in supporting and guiding principles toward improved school leadership (Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al. 2018; Saltzman, 2016). As a result, identifying and developing a strong pool of cluster managers is critical to strengthening the evaluation process and supervisory practices.

Even with aspiring cluster managers, districts should provide ongoing professional development that nourishes their evaluative and supervisory skills. As this study reported, no cluster managers were trained adequately nor given the support they needed to meet the challenging and multifaceted complexity of the principal evaluation process. Well-developed and structured professional development maintains cluster managers' competence; updates them on new developments, trends, and practices in the field; allows them to share their expertise among peers; and aids them in providing quality services.

With that in mind, more attention is required to provide adequate training and nourish professional development programs that enhance the capacity of principal

supervisors (Casserly et al., 2013; Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012; Honig & Rainey, 2014). In addition, professional development is required to close the performance gap among cluster managers and polish their supervisory practices and evaluative skills. This study concluded that without sustained professional development, cluster managers risk reaching a point of stagnation, trapped behind the bars of their prior experience, and reliance on their own professional practices.

Finally, ADEC should reconsider and narrow the responsibilities placed upon cluster managers and align these responsibilities to meet the district's instructional goals using a monitoring system to measure the effectiveness of cluster managers' supervisory practices. These types of efforts could possibly help cluster managers to determine areas for improvement. Such a system could act similarly with formal evaluation processes and practices to, mirror the same expectations as those designed for principal and teacher assessments. Some of these expectations might include the ability to shadow principals in their instructional practices, discuss observations and instructional core beliefs, interact with and collect data, engage in reflective conversations, and provide differentiated actionable feedback. For the most part, the given assessment would focus primarily on evaluating cluster managers' effectiveness in assisting and supporting school leaders.

Concluding Thoughts

School principals are the driving force determining the success or failure of their schools. Their instructional leadership is critical in shaping school environments and overall effectiveness of the teaching staff and selected curriculum. However, principals are not simply born great; rather, they are nurtured, guided, supported, and developed into orchestrators and influencers of learning who can make positive changes to lead their

schools toward success. In this current challenging and demanding era, supervision-embedded principal evaluations are important to the continual growth and development of the leadership capacity of school leaders.

With no evaluation system in place, a school district can neither determine whether individual principals are effective in leading their schools nor the extent to which they fulfill the districtwide vision, goals, and projected results. Correspondingly, without rigorous supervision embedded in the process, principals are deprived of guidance to further their development and find ways to support their professional practices that extend their own experiences as former teachers. The findings of this dissertation illuminate the important features, key approaches and practices, and interrelated nature of these two areas in the professional lives of school principals. Given the significance of the interrelatedness, principal leadership quality must be monitored and supervised continually to bring the anticipated positive results.

As echoed by Stronge (2013a), "Principal evaluation matters because principals matter. The research is clear that principals contribute substantially to student success. If we attempt to reform education without focusing on principalship quality in the school, the effort is unlikely to succeed" (p. 105).

As a final thought, school district officials and cluster managers should leverage evaluation and supervision practices as transformational efforts with reflective practices and conversations as core anchors for promoting leadership capacity. Only then will learning opportunities be a source of enlightenment and growth that transcends the mechanical procedures necessary to the processes of leader supervision and evaluation.

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SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Author(s), Date, Title	Purpose(s)	Method(s)	Sample	Result(s)	Implication(s) and Recommendation(s)
Abu Risq, S. A. (2012). "Perspectives of Gaza UNRWA schools' principals concerning their Performance Evaluation System and how to develop it"	-To examine the perceptions of Gaza UNRWA school principals regarding their evaluation system and identify ways to develop it	Primarily quantitative, with three open-ended questions at the end	The sample included 200 Palestinian principals—95 males,105 females— leading different school levels	-The evaluation was not aligned with the professional standards of principals. -The final evaluation score was a product of a mere visit. -Neither clear feedback nor discussion and dialogue were present when supervisors made visits to schools. -Supervisors were not involved in the process and not trained to supervise and evaluate principals.	-School districts should design special training for principal supervisors. -School districts should incorporate the principal standard into the evaluation system.
Casserly, M., Lewis, S., Simon, C., Uzzell, R., & Palacios, M. (2013). "Principal evaluations and the principal supervisor: Survey results from the great city schools"	-To examine how principals were supervised and evaluated in large urban districts and other districts that were a part of the Wallace leadership.	Quantitative study (surveys)	Surveys were received from 41 of the 67 members of the Council of the Great City Schools; so the total number of supervisors involved was 135 in 41 districts.	-Ninety percent of principal supervisors reported having received professional development training that centered on instructional leadership activities from their respective districts and other organizations. -Ninety-six percent of principal supervisors reported that the purpose of the districts' principal evaluation system was to improve principal effectiveness.	-More emphasis should be placed on instructional leadership activities to improve supervisors— who, in turn, improve school principals.
Catano, N., & Stronge, J. H. (2007). "What do we expect of school principals? Congruence between principal evaluation and performance standards"	-To explore the degree of emphasis on instructional leadership and management in the principal evaluation process. -To discover the degree of congruence of evaluation instruments with instructional leadership attributes.	Quantitative and qualitative methods of content analysis	A total sample of 100 evaluation instruments were received from 97 school districts in the state of Virginia.	-Ninety percent of the evaluation instruments used the language of ISLLC Standards in addressing instructional leadership and management-related responsibilities. -Fifteen percent of the evaluation instruments used the language of ISLLC Standards in addressing teacher training. -Seventy-one percent of the instruments reflected the need to perform an analysis of student data to support student achievement.	-To avoid conflicts and deliver clear communication to principals concerning their expectations of responsibilities and job performance, school districts need to revise evaluation instruments in a manner that matches state and professional standards. -School district need to determine whether principals can perform their stated responsibilities without taking an overly-heavy toll on their personal health or job satisfaction.

Corcoran, A., Casserly, M., Price-Baugh, R., Walston, D., Hall, R., & Simon, C. (2013) "Rethinking leadership: The changing role of principal supervisors"	-To examine how principal supervisors are selected, supported, and evaluated across the U.S.	Qualitative study: observation, interview, focus group interviews, and document analyses	Although 41 districts were chosen for the study, the number of interviewees was not mentioned; they included all superintendents, principal supervisors, deputies, staff, principal coaches, and curriculum directors.	-In their assignment to schools, each principal supervisor oversaw 24 schools on average—with a median of 18. -Not all principal supervisors received rigorous training and professional development on their techniques and practices. -Principal supervisors were evaluated differently across districts. -Roles and responsibilities of principal supervisors were more focused on instructional leadership, whereas operational and administrative roles were substantially maintained.	-Districts should clearly communicate the roles and responsibilities of principal supervisors. -Establishing sufficient professional development to improve their supervisory skills is critical. -Establishing an information-sharing structure ensures clear communication between principals and principal supervisors.
Davis, S., Kearney, K., Sanders, N., Thomas, C., & Leon, R. (2011). "The policies and practices of principal evaluation: A review of the literature"	-To extensively review relevant and accessible research studies on the topic of principal evaluation,	Literature review	The team reviewed 68 research studies for descriptive information, key findings, and implications: 28 primary sources and 40 secondary sources.	-Most evaluation systems lacked validity and reliability, which detracted from their value. -Professional standards were loosely translated in principal evaluations. -A growing number of districts began to stress instructional leadership. -Perceptions regarding the processes, purposes, and outcomes were mixed or unclear between superintendents and principals. -Principals believed their evaluation was a product of political influences and subjective opinions of district supervisors.	-More research is warranted to see the impact of principal evaluation on effective instructional leadership.
Fuller, E. J., Hollingworth, L., & Liu, J. (2015). "Evaluating state principal evaluation plans across the United States"	-To examine and evaluate the suitability of the adopted principal evaluation plans.	Quantitative and qualitative; the study uses survey data and document analysis.	- Fifty state instruments, along with the District of Colombia	-Seven emergent themes: (1) the purpose of evaluation; (2) the use of evaluation results; (3) estimate of school-level growth; (4) weight applied to student academic growth measures; (5) other measures of student achievement; (6) measures of the direct influence of the principal; and (7) ensuring the quality of the principal evaluation.	-Using results to make high-stakes decisions, especially for termination, is unwarranted and unethical because it places states in a fragile position when lawsuits are filed. -States need to ensure that ongoing data collection, analysis, and evaluations are well-implemented so results inform decisions. -It is important for states to consider contextual variations across schools when measuring principal effectiveness.

Honig, M. I. (2012). "District central office leadership as teaching: How central office administrators support principals' development as instructional leaders"	-To examine how central office supervisors support principal development and explore conditions that either help or hinder them in the process.	Comparative, qualitative case study of three urban school districts	Of 283 interviews with central office administrators, principals, and external staff involved in the process, nearly 265 and 200 observation hours and documents were needed, respectively.	-Due to the high number of principals, central office administrators reported not being able to afford adequate time to supporting each principal according to his or her needs. -No explicit definitions of how Central office administrators should work were established, making them rely on their past experience as guidance.	-Additional research should focus on the work of central office administrators in their day-to-day practice and how they engage with school principals.
Hvidston, D. J., Range, B. G., & McKim, C. A (2016). "Principals' perceptions regarding their supervision and evaluation"	-To explore the views of principals regarding their perceptions of ideal evaluation components. -To examine principals' perceptions concerning their current supervisory feedback given during their supervision and evaluation.	Qualitative method (two online, open-ended questions)	Of 266 principal participants, only 88 (34% response rate) agreed to participate. The sample was diverse, covering elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools in the Rocky Mountain Region.	-Principals noted the importance of in their supervision and evaluation. -Principals laid out ideal evaluation components to include clear and communicative responsibilities, ongoing professional growth, student achievement measures, and instructional leadership focus. -Principals identified two important elements necessary for successful supervision (specific feedback and reflective feedback).	-Evaluators need rigorous training to lead evaluations and provide meaningful supervision, making growth and improvement for principals. -An ideal evaluation should include the identified responsibilities of principals with heavy focus on instructional leadership roles, student achievement measures and professional growth space. -To improve the instructional leadership skills, principals need to receive specific feedback based on their needs and make ongoing reflective practice on their work.
Goldring, E., Cravens, X., Murphy, J., Porter, A., Elliott, S., & Carson, B. (2009). "The evaluation of principals: What and how do states and urban districts assess leadership?"	-To investigate the essential components of the principal evaluation processes in urban school districts and states.	Qualitative content analysis	Sixty-five instruments of principal evaluation (56 at the district level and 9 at the state level); the districts were from the Council of the Great City Schools and the Wallace Foundation districts	-Far less attention put on the critical behaviors that principals performed to influence student achievement. -No alignment between the practices of leadership assessment and personnel evaluation standards in terms of assessment utility and accuracy. -Paucity of discussion of psychometric properties, evaluation procedures, or evaluator training among the assessment instruments and procedures.	-The significance of incorporating strong theory and empirical evidence that the measured principal behaviors are linked to teaching and learning (validity). -The importance of the instrument yielding consistent results over time (reliability).

Goldring, E. B., Grissom, J. A., Rubin, M., Rogers, L. K., Neel, M., & Clark, M. A. (2018). "A new role emerges for principal supervisors: Evidence from six districts in the principal supervisor initiative"	-To unfold the districts' numerous achievements -To address the major challenges encountered with the PSI and underline the key takeaways from which other states and districts could benefit.	Qualitative and quantitative methods Two rounds of surveys administered for each PSI district Examination of documents, artifacts, and routine work	A total of 219 semi-structured interviews with central-office staff, principal supervisors, and school principals.	-Districts were able to revise and modify the roles and expectations of supervisors to focus on improving the instructional leadership practices of principals. -Most districts reduced the span of control, giving supervisors the ability to spend more coaching time with principals. -Districts conducted unique professional development sessions to support the supervisors in their tasks of coaching and supervising principals. -Only three districts launched fully-developed apprenticeship programs.	-Districts should balance their expectations for supervisors with their actual capacities. -Districts should establish high-quality, job-embedded professional development for principal supervisors. -Districts needed to address comprehensive succession planning and apprenticeship programs.
Kimball, S. M., Milanowski, A., & McKinney, S. A. (2009). "Assessing the promise of standards-based performance evaluation for principals: Results from a randomized trial"	-To provide evidence on the effectiveness of the new standards-based approach to principal evaluation, as opposed to the existing evaluation system that is not standard based.	Randomized-trial method (control group vs. treatment group), followed by quantitative and qualitative methods for collecting data (surveys, semi-structured interviews)	Seventy-six principals were randomly assigned to be evaluated under the new and old evaluation systems. Eight supervisors evaluated the principals. Principals were asked to complete a survey, and fifteen principals were chosen for the interviews.	-Regardless of its failure to correct the implementation of the random assignment, compounded by having lower statistical power due to nonresponse surveys, the principals indicated that the new, standard-based system was better in its clarity of performance expectations, feedback quality, capability to improve performance, fairness, and alignment with district goals. -The full benefits of the new, standard-based system were not gained due to the low-fidelity implementation on the part of the supervisors. -Principal interviews pointed out that the new system focused more on instructional leadership; whereas the old system focused more on building management.	-To realize the full potential of standard-based evaluations that guide principal behavior, districts need to ensure it is implemented as intended -To make standard-based evaluation workable for high-stakes purposes and decisions, much attention should be placed on uniform implementation by supervisors because differences in terms of quality (high vs. poor) in conducting the evaluation process could lead to negative reactions on the part of principals.
McMahon, M., Peters, M. L., & Schumacher, G. (2014). "The principal evaluation process and its relationship to student achievement"	-To examine the relationship between school districts' principal evaluation practices and their influence on student achievement in math and reading.	Mixed methods; using student achievement data, principal-evaluation instrument rubrics, and a principal questionnaire (33 items broken into four subscales)	Student achievement data collected from a sample of 41 schools representing 27 Texas school districts.	-No relationship found between how districts evaluated their school principals and their average school mathematics (p = .221) and reading (p=.115) achievement levels. -Misalignment was encountered between instrument and professional standards. -One-hundred percent of principals indicated no individual, professional development gains from the process.	-Evaluation instruments should be research-based and matched to state or national standards. -Emphasis should be placed on providing adequate professional development throughout the evaluation process. Evaluators need training on evaluation techniques and need to spend more time with principals in schools.

Parylo, O., Zepeda, S. J., & Bengtson, E. (2012). "Principals' experiences of being evaluated: A phenomenological study"	-To explore principals' lived experiences regarding their evaluation.	Qualitative study; interview method used for data collection.	Sixteen participants (eight male and eight female) leading different school levels from four school systems in Georgia	-Eight themes emerged: (1) increased awareness; (2) process, not an event; (3) transparency; (4) dialogue; (5) trust and respect; (6) feedback; (7) support; and (8) tensions. -The findings of the phenomenological analysis are that the principal evaluation did not support the directive control approach; the directive informational approach partially appeared in the theme feedback and trust. -The adult theory elements were included in the evaluation as perceived and experienced by the principals.	-Identifying the essence and meaning of the principal evaluation process may inform the reconceptualization and reconstruction of the evaluation. -This study warrants the need to further explore the characteristics of the evaluation process and identify ways to make it more effective. -Further research should investigate the principals' views as to what other aspects of their works should be incorporated in their evaluation.
Thomas, D. W., Holdaway, E. A., & Ward, K. L. (2000). Policies and practices involved in the evaluation of school principals	-To investigate the evaluation practices in Alberta.	Mixed research methods	Out of 100 principals, 65 completed the questionnaire; 63 superintendents responded to the same. Interviews were conducted with a subsample of 10 superintendents and 10 principals.	-Superintendents perceived principal evaluation as critical for many reasons; while principals tended to believed it was a routine activity. -The majority agreed that dialogue/conversation between superintendents and principals was vital in the principal evaluation process. -Both superintendents and principals indicated that cultural variables and context were considered in the principal evaluation process.	-More one-on-one discussion is needed between superintendents and principals to reconcile their differences in thinking regarding the purposes and expectations of principal evaluation. -Additional longitudinal case studies are needed on the effectiveness of principal evaluation and its impact on principals.
Yavuz, M. (2010). "Effectiveness of supervisions conducted by primary education supervisors according to school principals' evaluations"	-To examine the effectiveness of the supervision embedded in the principal evaluation process by supervisors.	Qualitative study (interviews)	Eight randomly chosen school principals were selected from Konya (a province in the Turkish Republic) for 90-minute, face-to-face interviews.	-Eight emergent themes: (1) bureaucracy, (2) physical condition of the school, (3) inconvenient supervision, (4) education and training priority, (5) unconstructiveness and dullness, (6) non-objectiveness, (7) problems with supervisor qualities, and (8) need for supervisors.	-In-service programs should be established for preparing supervisors. -Communication and relationships should be enhanced between principals and supervisors. -Principal supervision should be implemented in the same way as teacher supervision. -Allocated times for supervisory practices in the field should be extended.

| Zepeda, S. J., Parylo, O., & Bengtson, E. (2014).

"Analyzing principal professional development practices through the lens of adult learning theory"	-To explore the current practices of principal professional development in four school districts in Georgia and examine them through the applications of adult learning theory principles.	Qualitative method	Within four school districts in Georgia, 18 participants were interviewed; 7 represented 3 smaller districts, and 11 represented a larger district.	-Adult learning characteristics were manifested in the professional development of principals, each with different levels of manifestation: being problem-centered, relevancy orientated, goal oriented, and motivated.	-School districts need to incorporate adult learning principles in professional learning programs. -The alignment of professional learning and the needs of school district and participants should be positioned in a way that supports the principals of adult learning. -Principals should have some measure of autonomy to direct their own learning.

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL

The University of Georgia

Office of the Vice President for Research
Institutional Review Board

Phone ▮▮▮▮▮

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

July 31, 2017

Dear Sally Zepeda:

On 7/31/2017, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	A Case Study of Principal Supervision Embedded in the Evaluation Process in the United Arab Emirates
Investigator:	Sally Zepeda
Co-Investigator:	Ahmed Alkaabi
IRB ID:	STUDY00005027
Review Category:	Exempt 2, 4
Funding:	None

The IRB approved the protocol from 7/31/2017 to 7/30/2022.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103). Please close this study when it is complete.

Sincerely,

Kate Pavich, IRB Analyst
Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia

310 East Campus Rd, Tucker Hall Room 212 • Athens, Georgia 30602
An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

APPENDIX C

ABU DHABI EDUCATION COUNCIL APPROVAL

Date:16/05/2017

To:Public Schools Principals

Subject:Letter Of Permission

Dear Principals,

The Abu Dhabi Education Council would like to express its gratitude for your generous efforts and sincere cooperation in serving our dear students

You are kindly requested to allow the researrcher /**Ahmed Alkaabi,** to complete his research on:

A Case Study of Principal Supervision Embedded in the Evaluation Process in the United Arab Emirates schools

Please indicate your approval of this permission by facilitating her meetings with the sample groups at your resoected schools.

For Futher information : please conta

Thank you four ur cooperation.
Sincerely yours,

التاريخ : 16/05/2017

الساده / مديرى المدارس الحكومية المحترمين

الموضوع : تسهيل مهمة باحثين

تحية طيبة وبعد

يطيب لمجلس ابو ظبى للتعليم ان يتوجه لكم بخالص الشكر والتقدير لجهودكم الكريمة و التعاون الصادق لخدمة ابناننا الطلبة

و نود اعلامكم بموافقة مجلس ابو ظبي للتعليم علي موضوع الدراسة التي سيجريها بعنوانAhmed Alkaabi

A Case Study of Principal Supervision Embedded in the Evaluation Process in the United Arab Emirates ~~schools~~

لذا يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهام الباحث و مساعدتة علي إجراء الدراسة المشار إليها

للاستفسار : يرجي الاتصال

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم
وتفضلوا بقبول خالص الاحترام و التقدير

Dear Participant,

My name is Ahmed Alkaabi and I am a Ph.D. student in the Educational Administration and Policy Department, College of Education, University of Georgia. I am conducting a study entitled "A case study of principal supervision embedded in the evaluation process of the United Arab Emirates."

Purpose of the study
For this research project, I will be conducting a two-hour, semi-structured interview to examine principals' perceptions of their evaluation and supervision provided by the Abu Dhabi Education Council in Al-Ain public schools. The purpose of this interview is to aid me in investigating the principal evaluation processes and supervisory practices that cluster managers (evaluators) and principals follow throughout the academic year. I will ask you a number of questions concerning your evaluation process and supervisory approaches and whether they promote learning.

Risks and discomfort
I do not anticipate any risks or discomforts from participating in this research.

Benefits
- This study is expected to give you an opportunity to reflect on your practices and ruminate on your roles throughout the evaluation process.
- Educators may draw on the perspectives and insights highlighted in this research, which can lead them to revise their established principal evaluation process and refine their existing supervisory practices. For instance, principals leading schools of different levels (Cycles I, II, and III) might benefit from this study as the evaluative process and supervision embedded are examined from three different school levels.
- This research may teach educators what constitutes a suitable evaluation process, a good supervisory practice, an acceptable approach for a principal of a particular school level, and how supervision promotes learning and growth.

Incentives for participation
There are no incentives for participating in this study.

Taking part is voluntary
Participation in this study is voluntary and you may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. In addition, you are free to withdraw participation at any time should you

become uncomfortable. Your decision to participate will not influence your employee evaluations or other performance assessments related to your employment or your working relationship with the researchers conducting this study.

Audio Recording
The interview audio will be recorded. All recordings will be disposed of six months after the completion of the research analysis in accordance with confidentiality measures.

Privacy/Confidentiality
All information will be confidential and pseudonyms will be used in the interview transcript. In addition, I will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

Member Checking
The researcher will review the findings and interpretation of your responses with you at the end of research to ensure your views have been properly captured and represented.

Research Participant's Consent to Take Part in Research:
To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

Please sign both copies; keep one copy and return one to the researcher.
For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB); Telephone: (706) 542-3199; E-Mail: IRB@uga.edu.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Principal Interview

1- "I would like to start our interview by getting to know you a little better, what can you tell me about yourself?"

- Years of experience as a school principal in your school building and specific training you have had that supports you in your current role?

- Number of school personnel and students in your school?

- Your cluster manager? (provide brief description of cluster manager [i.e., male/female, length of your working relationship with the cluster manager…]).

Transition: "I am interested in learning more about the evaluation process, such what it encompasses and how it is conducted during the academic year? I also have several additional questions, with which I hope to guide our conversation, and more may arise as we discuss…"

Research Question: "How is the principal evaluation process conducted as described and experienced by public school principals in the city of Al-Ain?"

2- "What do you believe is the purpose of the principal evaluation process?"

Probing Questions

- "What are the criteria/standards under which you are evaluated?"

- "How clear are the particular details under each criterion?"

- "Are these criteria and expectations shared ahead of time as examples or as a precursor to the evaluation process?"
- "To whom might you go to seek help, if any, if the given criterion is unclear?"
- "Do you think the criteria are fair? Why or why not ?"
- "Would you single out one or more criterion as unfair? Give reasons for each one you think is unfair."

3- "Reflecting on your evaluation process, please describe your experience being evaluated as a principal."

Probing Questions

- "What are the steps that will be taken throughout the year to complete the process?"
- "How is the timeline structured for the evaluation process?"
- "Please tell me about the specific paperwork or documents used thus far. What was their degree of usefulness in the evaluation process?"
- "What sources of evidence will be needed and collected during the process? Who will collect the artifacts/evidence?"
- "When collecting data and evidence, which pieces do you view as irrelevant, if any?"

4- "Would you describe the evaluation process as formative or summative? Please explain.

Probing Questions

- "How is feedback delivered to you as part of the evaluation process; in writing, in person, or both?"

- "How many times during the year have you received feedback?"

- "In Abu Dhabi schools, there are mandatory professional development sessions (PD) that each principal should attend—tell me more about these and how, if at all, they link to your weaknesses and needs."

- "How do you think these PD sessions support you in your work?"

- "How is the professional development conducted during the evaluation process?"

5- "Based on your experience, what would you say are the strengths of your principal evaluation process? Weaknesses? If you were superintendent, how would you change the evaluation process for principals?"

Transition: "Now that we have discussed your evaluation process and how it is implemented, I want to ask you a few other questions about the supervision piece that occurs in the process..."

Research Question: "What are the supervisory approaches selected by cluster manager in the principal evaluation process?"

6- "Throughout the evaluation process, tell me who is your primary evaluator? Whom else, if anyone, is involved when you are being evaluated?"

7- "Describe what a typical evaluation session conducted by your cluster manager would look like."

Probing Questions

- "What methods does your cluster manager employ to gain information about your leadership performance?"

- "How often does your cluster manager visit you during the process?"

- "How much time does the cluster manager spend with you during each visit?"

- "What kind of conversations take place between you and the cluster manager for each visit?"

- "How are your goals identified at the beginning of the year?"

- "Do you have the opportunity to participate in determining these goals? Why or why not?"

8- "Based on the sessions you have with your cluster manager, how do you perceive the supervision implemented during the process?"

Probing Questions

- "Which of the following approaches are more representative of your cluster manager's supervisory practices: mostly directive, collaborative, or non-directive?"

- "When you have a supervisory session with your cluster manager regarding any problem or issue of your school building, how is it tackled between you and him/her?"

- "How are you engaged in the discussion? Who makes the final decision? Examples?"

9- "Do you think the supervisory approaches of your cluster manager change over time? How? What do you think about your cluster manager's knowledge and expertise in supporting you in the process?"

Research Question: In what ways do the supervisory approaches employed by cluster managers help principals sustain growth and development?

10- "As part of the principal evaluation process, how has supervision provided by your cluster manager impacted your practice, if at all?"

Probing Questions

- "Describe ways your supervisor supports or helps you sustain growth and development."

- "Are there decisions you have made that you believe are a result of the principal supervision provided by your cluster manager?"

- "Has your cluster manager impacted your decision to engage in professional growth? How?" (*voluntary vs mandatory?*)

11- "Think of specific improvements in student learning and teacher effectiveness to which you have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the evaluation process and supervision... Explain with examples."

12- "How could your supervisor best support your work to continually improve your effectiveness?"

Cluster Manager Interview

1- "I would like to start our interview by getting to know you a little better; what can you tell me about yourself?"

- Years of experience as a cluster manager and specific training you have had that supports you in your current role? Type of training you have had with principal evaluations?

- Number of principals to whom you are assigned (provide a brief description of school principals [e.g., male/female, length of working relationship with each, etc.]).

Transition: "I am interested in learning more about the evaluation process, such what it encompasses and how it is conducted during the academic year. I also have several

additional questions, with which I hope to guide our conversation, and more may arise as we discuss…"

Research Question: "How is the principal evaluation process conducted as described and experienced by public school principals in the city of Al-Ain?"

2- "What do you believe is the purpose of the principal evaluation process?"

Probing Questions

- "What are the criteria/standards under which you evaluate school principals?"

- "How clear are the particular details under each criterion?"

- "Are these criteria and expectations shared ahead of time as examples, or as precursors to the evaluation process?"

- "How do these criteria and expectations align with principals' work in school?"

- "Do you think the criteria are fair? Why or why not?"

- "Would you single out one or more criteria as unfair? Give reasons for each one that you think is unfair."

- "How do you rate the principal, numerical scale, checklist, and categories?"

- "Have you given principals the opportunity to participate in determining the criteria on which their evaluations are based? Would you consider their participation important? Why or why not?"

3- "Reflecting on the principal evaluation process, please describe your experience with principals."

Probing Questions

- "What are the steps that will be taken throughout the year to complete the process?"

- "How is the timeline structured for the evaluation process?"

- "What type of communication takes place? (face-to-face, phone, and/or emails)"

- "Tell me about the specific paperwork or documents used thus far; what was their degree of usefulness in the evaluation process?"

- "What sources of evidence will the principals be required to collect during the process?"

- "When collecting such data and evidence, which pieces do you view as irrelevant, if any?"

4- "Would you describe the evaluation process as formative or summative? Please explain."

Probing Questions

- "How is feedback delivered to the principal as part of the evaluation process; in writing, in person, or both?"

- "How many times per year have you given feedback to your assigned principal?"

- "How is the progress of principals monitored throughout the year?"

- "In Abu Dhabi schools, there are mandatory professional development (PD) sessions that each principal should attend—tell me more about these and how, if at all, they link to their weaknesses and needs. Are you in charge of designing these PDs or are they coming from ADEC? How so?"

- "How do you think these PD sessions support principals in their work?"

- "How is the professional development conducted differently for each principal (*focused vs. comprehensive?*)?"

- "What factors do you consider when you evaluate principals at the end of the year?"

- "What are the subsequent decisions and actions that might occur if the principal is Emirate versus a different nationality?"

5- "Based on your experience, what would you say are the strengths of your principal evaluation process? Weaknesses? If you were superintendent, how would you change the evaluation process for principals?"

Transition: "Now that we have discussed many constitutive elements of the evaluation process and how they are implemented, I want to ask you a few other questions about the supervision piece that occurs in the process..."

Research Question: "What are the supervisory approaches selected by the cluster manager in the principal evaluation process?"

6- "What do you believe is your purpose in supporting and coaching the principals?"

7- "Describe what a typical session is like with your school principal."

Probing Questions

- "What methods do you employ to learn about your assigned principal performance?"

- "How often do you visit principals during the evaluation process?"

- "How much time do you spend with them during each visit?"

- "Do you spend the same amount of time with each principal? Why?

- "What are your conversations like between you and your assigned principal during each visit?"

- "How are goals identified for each principal at the beginning of each year?"

- "Who determines these goals?"

8- "Based on the sessions you have had with your assigned principals, how do you perceive the supervision you apply during the process?"

Probing Questions

- "How different are your supervisory approaches when coaching new principals, as opposed to those with more experience?"

- "What factors do you consider when selecting the developmental supervision style for each principal (e.g., directive, directive-informational, collaborative, non-directive, etc.)?"

- "Do you think your supervisory style has changed over time with particular principals? How?"

9- "When you have a supervisory session with your assigned principal regarding any issue related to his/her school building, how do you tackle it? Can you think of specific examples?"

Probing Question

- "How are you and the principal engaged in discussion? Who makes the final decisions about matters discussed in conversations? Can you give examples?"

- "If you know the answer to any issue being discussed with the principal, do you let him or her know?"

- "What would happen if a disagreement regarding a given feedback took place between you and the principle?

Research Question "In what ways do the supervisory approaches employed by cluster managers help principals sustain growth and development?"

10- "As part of the principal evaluation process, how has the supervision that you have provided impacted the practices of principles?"

Probing Questions

- "Describe ways your supervisory practices and support help your assigned principals sustain growth and development."

- "Do the decisions you make with your assigned principals during supervisory sessions reflect the supervision you have provided? Examples, if any?"

- "Describe ways you encourage principals to engage in professional development, either voluntary or mandatory?"

- "Think of specific improvements in student learning and teacher effectiveness to which your principal supervision contributed (directly or indirectly) over the course of the evaluation process. Explain."

- "How could you best support the continual improvement of your principal performance in the process?"