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Seeking Significance: An Ethnographic Study of Teacher-Led Professional Experiences
and its Impact on Efficacy

By
Bonnie Coleman Bolado

A Dissertation Submitted to the
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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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Approval Page

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Abstract

Seeking Significance: An Ethnographic Study of Teacher-Led Professional Experiences and its Impact on Efficacy. Bolado, Bonnie Coleman, 2018: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Teacher-Led Professional Experiences/Adult Learning/Efficacy/ Teacher Development

Adult learning takes place through multiple facets. The understandings of how teachers chose to learn when given autonomy to engage in their own professional learning is a facet of teacher development that has not been widely researched. The research of Bolado (2018) utilized the grounded theory approach to develop themes of adult learning that provide insights to teacher needs when engaging in professional learning. Qualitative methods of research provided detailed perceptions of teacher needs when engaging in professional learning and how these experiences impacted their efficacy. This grounded theory research derived theories based on teacher perceptions of their confidence levels throughout the phenomenal study. Constructs of adult learning theory and social cognitive theory were applied during the course of research to identify their role in teacher-led professional experiences.

This study included 21 teacher participants from a middle school in North Carolina. The participants were of varying levels of experience and subject areas to gain data from an extensive sample which provided vast insights into this grounded theory study. Observations, interviews, and focus groups were conducted to gather rich data, which led to continual coding and categorizing of data to develop emergent theories. Throughout this research, there was a dynamic focus on understanding how teachers engage in professional learning when given autonomy and finding meaning to those avenues for future teacher development.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Professional learning has been a long-standing construct in aiding with teacher growth. Traditional models have been used throughout schools to increase teacher effectiveness. While research has been conducted on how traditional professional development models affect teaching practices, the impact of teacher-led professional practices on efficacy has not been explored. Understanding that self-efficacy is critical in an individual's confidence brings the generalization that individuals work diligently to master the various skills of their profession (Bandura, 1997). The teaching profession requires a vast set of skills that vary in each school setting. To enable teachers to be most successful, opportunities to engage in professional experiences that bring about new skills and enhancement of previous skills should be integrated across school communities (Balls, Eury, & King, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Easton, 2008a; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). The environment and facilitation of new knowledge and skills are vital to how teachers later synthesize knowledge and its overall impact on efficacy (Balls et al., 2016).

As we continue in the teaching profession of the 21st century, the concept of teacher efficacy is examined in multiple aspects of schools. Bandura (1997) described self-efficacy as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Significant research has been conducted over the years to determine correlations between efficacy and variable in schools (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Yoo, 2016). Much of this research has indicated the importance of understanding how to increase teacher confidence in their profession to shape cultures of schools (Balls et al., 2016; Harris & Muijs, 2005).

As research has been conducted, it has shown that there is a correlation between

increased collective efficacy and teacher effectiveness (Goddard et al., 2000). Goddard et al. (2000) researched teachers from 47 elementary schools; a teacher efficacy scale was used to measure efficacy. Teachers responded to a 21-item survey that was then analyzed to produce a mean score for each item (Goddard et al., 2000). According to this research, the factor loading for the item that “teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students” was .93; in addition, the factor loading for the item “teachers in this school have what it takes to get the children to learn” was .84 (Goddard et al., 2000, p. 495). According to Goddard et al., these items can be further linked to the understandings that the normative environment plays a role in shaping teacher behaviors, thus impacting student achievement.

In further analysis, researchers Goddard et al. (2000) were able to identify a positive correlation between an increase in a school’s collective efficacy score and student achievement in math and reading. Goddard et al. disaggregated data based on school demographics to determine a relationship between the dependent variable of student level demographics and achievement. Further analysis took place to determine a relationship, if any, between collective efficacy and student achievement in schools (Goddard et al., 2000). According to Goddard et al., the analysis provided data that demonstrated an 8.62 point average gain in math achievement and an 8.49 point average gain in reading achievement when correlated with high collective efficacy. Goddard et al. summarized that this gain “is associated with an increase of more than 40% of a standard deviation in student achievement” (p. 501).

With this research, Goddard et al. (2000) provided an explanation that high collective efficacy is linked to accepting challenging goals, working together as an organization, and having a work ethic that stems from resilience to succeed as a unit.

Before educators can embrace collective efficacy, individual teacher efficacy should first be established. Individual efficacy can be increased through professional experiences. These professional experiences allow educators to obtain knowledge and synthesize it to perform at a higher level (Balls et al., 2016). According to Balls et al. (2016), while the singular professional experience does not change a teacher's efficacy instantly, if the newly obtained knowledge is considered meaningful, with reflection, repetition, and motivation, teacher performance can be increased.

There are multiple constructs that bring understanding to the different avenues educational entities can utilize to impact professional learning. Common threads of theories that provide these opportunities for teachers to grow professionally include modeling, attention practices, motivation, reflective practices, mentoring, and empowerment. The theories of social learning, self-efficacy, and adult learning bring understandings of how teachers learn and create meaning of new knowledge.

Bandura's (1977b) social learning theory stated that some complex behaviors can only be produced through the act of modeling. Bandura (1977b) discussed that as we observe others, we form our own ideas; then when presented with the opportunity, we later use those observations as a framework for action in our own lives. According to Bandura (1977b), this theory also determines that we undergo a process of seeing the modeled events; retaining what we have learned; reproducing those actions; and last, participating in motivational processes to master the performance. When a person undergoes this strategic process about their own abilities and skills, they begin to develop their own strategies to implement, which, in turn, can have an impact on efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Drago-Severson (2009) explained that in order for educators to be effective in the

classroom, meaningful practices are needed for adult learners to develop and grow. The core values of adult learning theories are embedded in teaming, providing leadership roles, reflective practice, and mentoring (Drago-Severson, 2009). Each of these pillars play a role in developing teacher efficacy. Understanding how teachers learn and construct meaning of information is instrumental in developing self-efficacy and supporting teachers as learners (Drago-Severson, 2009). Balls et al. (2016) confirmed that professional reflection and opportunities to participate in ongoing professional experiences promote increased efficacy. These constructs of adult learning center on the understanding that internalization of information and differentiation when implementing new initiatives are essential to professional growth (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Goddard et al. (2000) discussed the importance of teacher empowerment when building efficacy. According to Goddard et al., research showed that in a school where educators felt powerless, the correlation to collective teacher efficacy was negative. Goddard et al.'s research, which was conducted to determine this correlation, included a pilot study of 70 teachers across five states and a comprehensive study of 47 elementary schools worth of teachers in one urban district, which were discussed previously. Teachers were given collective efficacy items in addition to a sense of powerlessness scale; the results indicated a negative correlation of $-.51$ for the variables of collective teacher efficacy and teacher powerlessness (Goddard et al., 2000). This research further implicates the influential aspect of teacher leadership in teacher efficacy.

Harris and Muijs (2005) discussed that regardless of the type of leadership roles, formal or informal, teachers thrive where there are opportunities to be leaders and collaborate to solve problems. Harris and Muijs further explained that this distributed form of leadership works to build a school culture that empowers others. Research has

determined that when teachers take on more leadership roles, they tend to influence those around them outside of their classroom (Harris & Muijs, 2005); thus, when educators believe in those initiatives, there is a direct impact on the students they serve (Harris & Muijs, 2005).

According to Balls et al. (2016), Goddard et al. (2000), and Harris and Muijis (2005), teacher self-efficacy is impacted by professional experiences, leadership roles teachers encompass, and the avenues in which teachers learn. Furthermore, research identifies that teacher efficacy is strongly correlated to teacher effectiveness, student achievement, and teacher attitudes (Balls et al., 2016; Goddard et al., 2000; Harris & Muijis, 2005). It appears from the research that building teacher efficacy should be a maintained focus of schools.

Yoo (2016) examined the effect of online professional development learning on teacher self-efficacy of 148 educators. The Teacher's Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES) was administered within a 5-week period, before and after the participants participated in a 5-week online training (Yoo, 2016). The *t* test and ANOVA test were used to analyze these results, which indicated a significant difference in scores for three dimensions of teacher efficacy: instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement (Yoo, 2016). According to Yoo, there is a need to continue to examine teacher efficacy, as it provides insight into teacher quality and sustainability. Developing avenues to grow teachers is essential to continued school improvement (Balls et al., 2016; Yoo, 2016). The most widely utilized models of professional development consist of leader-chosen training, evaluation and assessment, involvement in an improvement process, collaborative action research, self-directed learning, and mentoring (Drago-Severson, 2009). While many of these models are practiced throughout schools, little to no research

exists which shows the impact of teacher-led professional experiences on teacher efficacy.

Purpose of the Study

Research described previously (Goddard et al., 2000; Yoo, 2016) identified understandings that increased self-efficacy of teachers can transfer to student needs being met in the classroom. This understanding provides insight to the importance of teacher efficacy. In an effort to develop teachers, schools utilize traditional methods of professional development which are led by an instructor or, in recent years, delivered online through modules. While current research findings show that online professional development can have an impact on efficacy, it is necessary for research to be conducted to find the most beneficial ways to foster and grow teachers (Yoo, 2016).

While we know that professional development enhances teacher effectiveness and is a needed component in teacher development (Balls et al., 2016; Goddard et al., 2000; Harris & Muijis, 2005), there is minimal to no research that discusses the roles of teacher-led professional experiences and teacher efficacy. The purpose of this study was to develop understandings of avenues of learning that teachers chose to engage in when participating in autonomous professional learning and the impact these experiences have, if any, on efficacy.

Professional experiences, any avenue of attainment of professional knowledge that is gained from interaction in the school, can be formal or informal (Balls et al., 2016). These interactions are primarily teacher induced, unlike traditional professional learning communities (PLCs), which are organized by school leaders and typically considered a formal meeting (Balls et al., 2016). While research determines that PLCs do have an impact on teacher efficacy, it is up to the school administrators to ensure teachers

are adhering to these meetings. According to Buffum et al. (2008), school leaders should cultivate the learning community by embedding professional development in schools. While this model has proven to be effective, it is also stated that it is vital for autonomy and empowerment to be established (Balls et al., 2016; Buffum et al., 2008). The research of Pearson and Hall (1993) identified teacher autonomy as what teachers believe they have control over in their work environment. Gabriel, Day, and Allington (2011) further summarized engaged autonomy as teachers not working in isolation but rather being innovative while developing individually and collaboratively sharing their expertise.

Statement of the Problem

While current literature discusses the importance of professional development for increasing teacher efficacy, it does not address the unique aspect of teacher-led professional experiences and its relationship to teacher efficacy. This research study focused on teachers in the leadership role being given autonomy to work collaboratively to create their own professional experiences and the impact this model had on teacher efficacy.

The significance of this study is the examination of the role of teacher leadership in relationship to conducting professional experiences and the impact it has on efficacy. Components of adult learning theory were analyzed to determine the effect these have on teacher efficacy. The extent to which the application of social learning theory was utilized in these teacher-led professional experiences was also examined. Understanding the relationship between teacher-led professional experiences and efficacy creates opportunities for schools to have insight into the ways teachers learn and the influence autonomy has in guiding teacher professional development.

Conceptual Base

To excel beyond the organizational mindsets, individuals must initiate a new set of beliefs they feel will produce an outcome they are passionate about (Balls et al., 2016). Balls et al. (2016) explained that in order for this mindset to shift, individuals must examine their passion to excel and their own dispositions. This examination leads to potentially building efficacy and moving towards a community that has shared values and shared beliefs about their organization (Balls et al., 2016).

The conceptual basis for this study is rooted in Bandura's (1977b) social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory. Social cognitive theory brings forth understandings of learning that teachers undergo to synthesize new knowledge and produce new processes (Bandura, 1977b). Individual efficacy beliefs are developed by not only mastery experiences but also vicarious experiences and evaluations from peers they value (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) elaborated that all of these have significant influence on how one increases their own self-efficacy. With the understanding that teachers can develop self-efficacy by learning through processes of modeling, reflection, and motivation, Bandura (1977b, 1997) identified the foundation for the study of how teacher-led professional experiences impact teacher efficacy.

Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory identifies the importance of control by stating the role an individual's motivation and belief of what they can achieve play in developing efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy, a person's belief that they are capable of accomplishing certain actions to achieve objectives, has significant influence over a person's efforts they put forth and their perseverance to accomplish given goals. Bandura (1997) confirmed that "competence requires appropriate learning experiences; it does not emerge spontaneously" (p. 15); thus, it is critical to have an

understanding of the current levels of efficacy for particular events before moving forward, as levels of confidence may differ in given situations.

Drago-Severson (2009) discussed the practice of distributing leadership to support transformational learning and build capacity in educators. Providing these leadership roles should be assumed with the understanding of developing individuals to support growth (Drago-Severson, 2009). Balls et al. (2016) identified empowerment principles as an attitude in a collective environment instead of simply an action. This understanding requires a shift in the operational models of schools allowing more teacher control in decision-making (Balls et al., 2016). This conceptual basis of leadership and empowerment is linked to teacher efficacy (Balls et al., 2016; Drago-Severson, 2009).

The theoretical framework for the study of teacher-led professional experiences and efficacy is established in Bandura's self-efficacy and cognitive learning theories. The purpose of this research was to identify the impact of efficacy as it pertains to leadership roles in professional experiences. Self-efficacy, as discussed previously, is influenced by multiple factors. When one or any of these factors are modified or implemented, there is a potential for efficacy and dispositions to change. The relationship, if any, is sought to be identified by examining teachers in leadership roles, understanding how they influence their own learning, and its correlation to efficacy.

Research Questions

Efficacy is a factor in providing optimal learning for students. When teachers feel validated and have confidence in their abilities, it is reflected in their teaching (Balls et al., 2016; Goddard et al., 2000; Harris & Muijis, 2005). While we know there are multiple positive impacts of professional development, little research has been conducted that describes how teacher autonomy in leading their own learning impacts teacher

efficacy. Understanding how teachers choose to synthesize new knowledge and create meaning of newly learned strategies is vital for school leaders to know in order to support the school community. Therefore, this study aimed to assess, specifically, teacher-led professional experiences and their relationship to efficacy. The following questions were examined in this study.

1. How do teacher-led professional experiences impact teacher efficacy?
2. In teacher-led professional experiences, how do teachers choose to learn, and how does that impact the way we approach adult learning?

Professional Significance of the Study

Elements of social cognitive theory and teacher efficacy have been studied for several years. Traditional professional development has long been a construct in schools with the intent to better inform teachers and provide opportunities for growth in the profession. A foundation of 21st century schools is the presence of PLCs where meeting times are established for teachers to collaborate regularly. This is an established time that teachers adhere to and work towards meeting defined goals. PLCs have been shown to be an important component of schools that have enhanced efficacy (Buffum et al., 2008). While this is a defined understanding in many of today's schools, recent research has discussed the importance of teachers participating in professional experiences and the impact of those experiences on teacher efficacy (Balls et al., 2016). Balls et al. (2016) discussed that professional experiences are experienced throughout a teacher's professional day, not just at a designated time; and these experiences can be in multiple facets such as simple hallway interactions, book talks, or any opportunity a teacher has to learn new knowledge. The key component that drives teacher motivation with both PLCs and professional experiences is how teachers synthesize this newly obtained knowledge

and implement it in their classrooms (Balls et al., 2016).

In addition to professional experiences, the aspect of teacher leadership has also been studied in recent years. Harris and Muijs (2005) discussed the process of teachers working collaboratively to solve problems and becoming teacher leaders where they “extend their sphere of influence” (p. 16). These current understandings have led to the significance of determining the correlation, if any, of teachers leading their own professional experiences and their effect on efficacy. This study provided new insights into the impact that both teacher leadership and teacher-chosen professional experiences have on teacher confidence. In addition, this research encompassed components of adult learning theory and social cognitive theory, bringing awareness to the role, if any, these two theories play in developing teacher efficacy.

Research shows that professional development does expand teacher knowledge and contribute to their growth (Guskey, 2002). Guskey (2002) further concluded that while many times these activities are designed to change teacher attitudes or beliefs about teaching and learning, they do not. Instead, teachers view professional development as opportunities that bring practical ideas to their classroom and relate to their day-to-day activities (Guskey, 2002). Guskey (2002) presented an alternative model to implement teacher change with professional development that yields change in beliefs and attitudes after teachers change classroom practices and experience a change in student learning. This model demonstrates that change in beliefs does not take place first, rather it is an outcome after teachers have direct experiences with student outcomes as a product of their newly developed strategies (Guskey, 2002).

Cumiskey, O’Neal, Rawls, and Ringler (2013) conducted research utilizing Guskey’s (2002) alternative model of professional development to gain understandings of

the impact this model has on the school administrator as the instructional leader. This study also aimed to understand teacher perceptions of the progress of this professional development using Guskey's (2002) five levels of framework for evaluation: participant reactions, participant learning, organization support, participant use of new knowledge, and student learning outcomes (Cumiskey et al., 2013). This year-long professional development was conducted at two public schools in rural North Carolina and studied to determine impact (Cumiskey et al., 2013). Surveys were conducted along with interviews; the data revealed, over a 4-month period, that teachers had collaborated with their peer coaches to facilitate the newly learned professional development to some extent (Cumiskey et al., 2013). In addition, Cumiskey et al. summarized that their qualitative data indicated that there was an impact on teacher perceptions of their principals when providing formative feedback. Last, Cumiskey et al. also identified that this model influenced teacher leadership in the participating schools. This study's findings provide insight of the potential of alternative professional learning models for adult learners, which brings to the forefront the importance of studying teacher-initiated professional experiences in schools.

According to Cumiskey et al. (2013), the study utilized Guskey's (2002) model and initiated professional development through directives from leadership, then included opportunities throughout the process for teachers to be leaders in the year-long professional development. These research findings of Guskey's (2002) professional development model have identified gaps in the current, more widely used professional development model, which initiates professional development for teachers without understandings of teacher needs and without providing opportunities for teacher leadership. These understandings bring forth the professional significance of this study

by identifying the need to study differentiated teacher-led professional experiences and the impact they had on efficacy.

Overview of the Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact, if any, teacher-led professional experiences have on efficacy and if these experiences contribute to teacher development. For this qualitative research, the grounded theory approach was utilized. The grounded theory approach engages the researcher in fieldwork that links concepts to situations of practicality (Denscombe, 2014). Instead of testing a theory, Hansen (2005) summarized that this approach identifies patterns from data that “emerge and reoccur” (p. 268) to derive potential theories and concepts. With this understanding, the researcher developed qualitative processes that allowed for an “open mind” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 107) when researching, thus collecting data through open-ended methods of inquiry (Denscombe, 2014). The processes used in this study for data gathering were interviews, a focus group, and recorded dialogue of observations.

Participating in the study were 21 teachers from one middle school in North Carolina. Teachers were teamed across grade levels within their subject area. Participants decided upon an initiative they would like to learn about using their ratings of standards three and four from the North Carolina educator self-assessment rubric. Then, using their own methods of study, they engaged in chosen activities to learn about the concept. As a part of the learning process, the participants created and led their own professional experiences to explore the concept. During this time, teacher choices of facilitation of learning were examined. In addition, the impact these experiences had on efficacy was researched. In the initial phase, teachers were observed, interviews were conducted to gain initial insights of teachers, and initial coding took place. In subsequent

phases, additional observations took place, a focus group was facilitated, and final interviews were conducted. Questions for the final stage of interviews were created based on theoretical sampling from stage one. At the end of the final stage, data were coded using focused and axial coding processes.

Because of the lack of research of teacher-led professional experiences, the grounded theory research was most appropriate since the researcher does not develop any hypotheses prior to research in this method of study (Hansen, 2005). This allowed the researcher to remain open to participant points of view (Hansen, 2005). The constant-comparative method used while coding data in this approach allowed for ongoing application of codes and modification of categories in the analyses as needed (Hansen, 2005). This was a critical component for this study as little research has been conducted about teacher-led professional experiences and its impact on efficacy, thus new opportunities were presented to compare, revise codes, and identify emerging theories (Denscombe, 2014).

Definitions of Key Terms

Collaborative practices. Collaborative practices is a term used to describe teachers sharing, contributing, adapting, and inventing to successfully provide quality teaching in their respective classrooms (Balls et al., 2016).

Collective efficacy. Bandura (1997) summarized perceived collective efficacy as “an overriding quality that affects different aspects of a social system” (p. 247). It is understood that teacher perceptions of personal efficacy come about in different environmental qualities when studied in school climates; thus, when a staff judges themselves collectively, a sense of collective efficacy can be determined (Bandura, 1997).

Empowerment. Bandura (1997) described empowerment as gained through the development of personal efficacy where individuals work towards shared benefits of autonomy, many times through prolonged struggle.

Mastery experiences. The acquisition of skills through deliberate guidance which utilizes observation, guided modeling, practice, and application in which the learner feels best meets their needs (Bandura, 1997).

Mentoring. A relationship that exists between a mentee and mentor that fosters growth through dialogue, which can include opportunities to share and reflect about beliefs and expand their own perspectives (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Professional experiences. Balls et al. (2016) defined professional experiences as “the past personal experiences of each community member as a learner, teacher, team member, and leader” (p. 73).

PLCs. Structures that are organized opportunities for teachers to participate in common planning time, collaborate, and share experiences that impact student learning (Balls et al., 2016).

Reflective practice. According to Balls et al. (2016), reflective practice is the act of thinking about an action or event that occurred; considering upon the activity as a problem-solving exercise; and last, thinking about the beliefs and values of the practice.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the capabilities to which one believes they have to achieve particular goals or actions and produce a set of accomplishments (Bandura, 1997).

Teacher leadership. Teacher leadership describes leaders as individuals who are assertive, take risks, and work to provide new purposes to improve the school culture. This role can be in a formal or informal capacity within a school (Balls et al., 2016).

Vicarious experiences. According to Bandura (1977a), vicarious experiences are when an individual see others perform activities without having adverse consequences. This observation then can encourage others to continue to engage in their efforts to improve in performance (Bandura, 1977a).

Organization of the Dissertation

Efficacy plays a role in many dynamics of the educator's profession. The continuation of research of teacher efficacy and its impact on different variables is critical for improving schools. Understanding the impact, if any, of teacher-led professional experiences on self-efficacy may bring new perspective to the way educational entities understand adult learning and facilitate professional development. As discussed previously, research has demonstrated the influence of efficacy on school communities to include student achievement, implementation of professional development, and teacher effectiveness (Cumiskey et al., 2013; Goddard et al., 2000; Guskey, 2002). The significance of this research, which focuses on teacher leadership and empowerment when conducting professional experiences, may bring new insights to their correlation, if any, to teacher efficacy.

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the theoretical frameworks utilized in this study. Social learning and self-efficacy theories provide context to the constructs of how teachers assimilate learning for themselves and their dispositions and confidence to improve. Adult learning theory is also examined, which brings forth understandings of how teachers learn as adults and the pillars of adult learning that affect implementation of newly learned skills. Constructs of teacher development are reviewed to provide context of avenues that grow teachers as professionals. The exploration of these constructs and theories seeks to inform the research of how teacher-led professional experiences

influence efficacy.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology utilized to conduct the research for this grounded theory study. Details of how data were collected and analyzed, the setting and participants of the study, and the research design are explained. The stages to collect data are discussed including interviews, focus groups, and observations. In addition, the literature which explains and validates the use of the grounded theory methodology is presented.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed presentation of the results which are organized to address each research question. The qualitative data of the research are presented to show findings based on the coding analyses that took place through this grounded theory study. Recordings from observations, focus groups, and interviews were analyzed. The data are summarized through narratives discussing the qualitative findings. Commonalities and patterns are identified to find emergent theories during the processes of initial, focused, and axial coding.

Chapter 5 includes a summary of the results that connects the research findings to previously reviewed literature. Recommendations and next practices are presented based on the qualitative data findings for teacher-led professional experiences and their impact on efficacy. This conclusive chapter provides understandings of what has been learned about the independent variable of teacher-led professional experiences and its impact on the dependent variables of teacher efficacy and adult learning to identify emergent theories from the research conducted.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

In the realm of education, professional learning has been an established concept of the teaching profession. Models of professional development have changed over the years to reflect what, at the time, were considered the needs of schools. Easton (2008a) described the shift in the different terms used for developing teachers. According to Easton (2008a), the term “professional training” (p. 755) has been used to tell exactly how to facilitate particular modes of teaching; next, the term “professional development” (p. 755) came along to describe what a person demonstrates to someone to move them along in their understandings. While these approaches are used, according to Easton (2008a), the educators of today are a part of increasingly motivating environments where they are asked to respond to the needs of ever-changing learners, thus finding that they are needing to constantly improve in their profession. According to Easton (2008a), today’s educators need to engage in professional “learning” (p. 755) to grow as learners and change their practices. Multiple elements examine how teachers grow and learn including understanding how adults learn effectively, the cognitive processes that take place when learning a new skill, and intrinsic mechanisms that encourage teachers to synthesize new knowledge. Understanding these elements presents fundamental constructs that guide teacher development.

This study examined the role of leadership and autonomy in developing teachers when engaging in professional experiences and its impact, if any, on efficacy. Research-based themes of teacher development were explored including empowerment and elements of professional learning. In addition, research was based on the theoretical frameworks of Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy and social learning theory, as well as

Drago-Severson's (2009) adult learning theory, and Knowles et al.'s (2015) understandings of the adult learner. This literature review provides insight into these theoretical frameworks and foundational knowledge of each of these constructs.

Teacher Development

The constructs of teacher development have been defined over the years in many ways. According to Evans (2002), while many researchers have worked to conceptualize this idea, it is still an area of study that is emergent and underdeveloped. Evans (2002) discussed that the development of teachers occurs both systemically and in unplanned avenues which includes both the skills and procedures of the teacher as well as development of teacher attitudes and ideals. Evans (2002) described two elements of teacher development: attitudinal and functional. Attitudinal development is the process of modifying teacher attitudes through reflection and analysis, whereas functional development improves teacher performance through the enhancement of skills (Evans, 2002).

Ball and Cohen (1999) described teacher development as a process that takes place through experiences and tasks that lead to professional discourse. Through investigation of new practices and analysis of professional learning tasks, teachers develop new ideals and methodologies (Ball & Cohen, 1999). The TELT research project surveyed over 100 teachers in their education programs to examine their understandings of student learning (Kennedy, 1999). Teachers were presented with examples of student work and asked how they would interpret the needs of the students; the data reflected that the majority of teachers only analyzed student work for prescriptive writing rather than the students' process of thinking or understanding of concepts (Kennedy, 1999). Based on this study, Kennedy (1999) identified the need to

develop practicing teachers in the context of practical experience, not just in preservice teaching scenarios.

According to Guskey (2000), the need for professional development extends from the ideal that education is an evolving field that requires expanding knowledge to develop new expertise. Guskey (2000) defined professional development as an intentional process that is ongoing and systematic. While Evans (2002) discussed the definitive role of reflection and attitudes in teacher development which can occur through unintentional avenues, Guskey (2000) maintained that in order for development of teachers to be productive, it must be planned and deliberate. Guskey (2000) continued to state that the processes, procedures, and evaluations should be well-defined and planned in order to reach the professional development goals. As Ball and Cohen (1999) reiterated the need for teacher development to be ongoing in the teaching context, Guskey (2000) also stated the need for professional development to be a continuous, job-embedded process. According to Guskey (2000), professional development should not be a process that simply teaches educators the next educational trend, rather it should support greater change that stems from the organization's goals. Guskey (2000) stated, "teacher knowledge and practices are the most immediate and most significant outcomes of any professional development effort" (p. 75). This understanding brings the idea that adaptation of classroom practice is ongoing and requires time (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Guskey, 2000).

Balls et al. (2016) described professional experiences as both formal and informal experiences that teachers undergo. Balls et al. discussed that the knowledge gained from professional experiences translates into growth of concepts and skills, in addition to a person's confidence to perform. In a study conducted by the National Center for the

Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 606 teachers were surveyed and interviewed to analyze understandings of the impact of professional development using three different models: multisession workshops, mentor-teacher groups, and practitioner research groups (Balls et al., 2016). According to Balls et al., the studies found that the amount of professional development and quality of the experiences had the most significant and lasting impact on teacher development. Evans (2014) provided further insight into the understandings of how teacher development occurs through informal contexts. Evans (2014) stated that “effective professional development is not necessarily confined to intentional development opportunities and events. We have accepted that it is often ‘situated’ and can occur implicitly” (p. 181). This understanding correlates to the professional experiences defined by Balls et al., which conclude that meaningful professional experiences can occur in multiple contexts, including informal interactions. They continued to state that those interactions occur anytime a teacher has an experience where they synthesize newly acquired knowledge and utilize it to develop as a professional (Balls et al., 2016).

Within these understandings derive common themes of teacher development that encompass how teachers grow as professionals. The common themes found in literature include teacher empowerment, professional experiences, and understandings of adult learning. Throughout literature, these themes have been described as avenues which contribute to teacher development and teacher confidence. As these constructs are explored, understandings are derived from research that contribute to this study of how teacher-led professional experiences impact efficacy in teachers.

Teacher Empowerment

Zimmerman (1995), citing research from Rappaport (1987), depicted the

psychological empowerment theory as the construct to gain mastery over issues that are concerning to the individual. These constructs involve perceptions of personal control as well as the ability to be proactive and have autonomy over an individual's own environment (Zimmerman, 1995). According to Zimmerman, psychological empowerment is related to power; but while power suggests authority, empowerment is a feeling of control and awareness of the environment in which one engages. Zimmerman continued to identify the ideals of organizational empowerment, which provides structures that support change at a community level where members work cohesively towards common organizational goals. Zimmerman pointed out that psychological empowerment should not be mistaken for individualism; he stated that it is more than an "intrapersonal construct" (p. 596). Rather, it is the understanding of one's environment and taking measures to influence those agents one can have autonomy over (Zimmerman, 1995). Zimmerman described the importance of awareness when understanding empowerment; he stated that "psychological empowerment includes beliefs that goals can be achieved, awareness about resources and factors that hinder or enhance one's efforts to achieve those goals, and efforts to fulfill the goals" (p. 582).

Processes individuals undergo that result in empowering outcomes yield from opportunities that involve organizations and individual experiences (Zimmerman, 1995). According to Zimmerman (1995), empowering processes are opportunities for individuals to have control and influence over decisions that affect their lives. These processes include individuals engaging in experiences where they are able to link their goals to ability to achieve them and receive accessibility to resources as well as control over those resources (Zimmerman, 1995). Empowering organizations evolve in many different contexts during these processes, which span from mutual help groups to

mentorships (Zimmerman, 1995). The processes an individual undergoes to improve the empowered outcomes of others include involving community members during the development of the outcome, implementing interventions in response to issues, allowing professionals to become co-partners, and creating opportunities for development of skills so there is no dependency on professionals (Zimmerman, 2005).

Zimmerman (1995) described empowered outcomes as a consequence of empowering processes that involve three different components: intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral. The intrapersonal component consists of a person's perceived control and self-efficacy as well as their own abilities to have influence over their own environments (Zimmerman, 1995). The interactional component is the person's awareness of their environments and accessibility to resources to be empowered to reach their goals (Zimmerman, 1995). According to Zimmerman, skill development is also included in this domain, which involves leadership, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. Zimmerman described that development of these skills is important to prepare individuals to bridge between perceived control and actually taking action to exert control. The behavioral component involves behaviors that play a direct role in empowerment outcomes such as community involvement, participation in an organization, and developing coping behaviors (Zimmerman, 1995). Zimmerman discussed that the engagement in behaviors allows for potential increased empowerment through individuals learning to adapt and manage environmental factors.

A study was conducted of 324 middle managers who attended a managerial development program over a 3-year period (Spreitzer, 1995). Questionnaires were given that utilized a 5-point Likert scale, which assessed correlations between intrapersonal empowerment and variables of workplaces (Spreitzer, 1995). The analyses of these

surveys demonstrated that there was a strong correlation between empowerment and social structures in the workplace (Spreitzer, 1995). According to Spreitzer (1995), the findings in this study indicated, when utilizing the *r* test to compute results, that the correlation between empowerment and culture in the workplace was .86, and the correlation between empowerment and access to resources was .87. These correlations suggest that structures in place in the work environment do play a role in how individuals feel empowered in the workplace (Spreitzer, 1995).

Balls et al. (2016) described empowerment as a catalyst for motivating an individual to achieve a goal. As Zimmerman (1995) described empowerment as an agent of autonomy, Balls et al. reiterated this understanding by stating the free will individuals have allows for opportunities to create experiences they feel are needed to be successful. According to Balls et al., the concept of transference of power can create autonomy for the recipient to have choices and, in turn, control over decisions that pertain to their own lives. For teachers, opportunities of empowerment can translate into motivation and lead to a culture that actively seeks strategies and establishes work ethic for the betterment of the school community (Balls et al., 2016).

While empowerment is referred to as an individual's opportunities to have autonomy over decisions that influence their lives and be proactive in their own environment, research suggests that teachers do, at times, resist reform processes that allow empowerment (Balls et al., 2016; Thornburg & Mungai, 2011; Zimmerman, 1995). Thornburg and Mungai (2011) summarized the facilitation of school reform and its impact on teacher empowerment. The study of Thornburg and Mungai sought to understand teacher challenges faced in school reform across five public school districts through avenues of professional development and collaboration. Formation of teacher

teams were created that included 42 teachers in a professional development series; interviews were conducted during the research to gain understandings of experiences teachers have about school reform and professional learning. Through interviews, it was found that 38 of the 42 teachers felt time to initiate new reforms was not readily available with the demands of student learning and achievement (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). Other concerns included peer communication (20 of 42 responses) and accountability versus needs (30 of 42 responses); those concerns included responses that reforms focus on student achievement when the inclusion of student immediate social-emotional needs is not taken into account (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). This study recognized the context in which teachers experience their work while working towards reform initiatives, which furthers knowledge that can result in empowering teachers to feel more equipped to support change in schools (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). While deliberate professional development and reform was thought to be an avenue for collaboration, these participants suggest that the informal communication that exists among colleagues was not as prevalent, thus the empowerment of teachers to have meaningful dialogue does diminish (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011).

According to Balls et al. (2016), a perceived level of organizational empowerment is reflected in the quality and quantity of shared decision-making experiences, which extend beyond formal meetings. Opportunities for empowerment are enhanced by mastery of skills, accessibility to resources, and vicarious experiences which all contribute to a shared attitude, not independent processes (Balls et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 1995).

Professional Learning

The term professional development has evolved in education to reflect

understandings that effective teacher change requires learning and response to the needs of learners they teach (Easton, 2008a). Professional training describes the influx of workshops and courses designed to develop an individual in their profession; researchers conclude that while those activities are necessary, they are not always sufficient (Easton, 2008a; Fullan, 2007; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). According to Guskey and Yoon (2009), many workshops are “one shot variety that offers no genuine follow-up or sustained support” (p. 496). Professional learning takes place in contexts of schools, where applicable inquiry and collaboration research can take place along with professional development activities that are sustained over time (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Easton, 2008a; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). With the conception that training takes place through inquiry, common themes emerge that enable professional learning in schools (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Those themes include ongoing, job-embedded inquiry; use of teacher expertise; and collaborative practices.

Ongoing, Job-Embedded

Darling-Hammond (2000) summarized that a critical job of teacher preparation programs is to develop capacity of teachers so they may inquire systemically about the effects of teaching and learning. This preparation leads to educators viewing experiences from multiple perspectives and engaging in inquiry within their daily teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Ball and Cohen (1999) built on this understanding by stating, “orientating the professional learning toward joint professional study and analysis of teaching and learning would knit professional development inextricably into the practice of teaching” (p. 19). According to Easton (2008a), the analysis of teaching can surface in the everyday job of the teacher: Learning activities such as book studies, action-research, lesson studies, and critical friend groups provide contexts and avenues for learning and

analysis to occur. Hawley and Valli (1999) described the assessment and improvement of practices as “job-embedded learning” (p. 140). Guskey and Yoon (2009) elaborated that the context in which teachers learn plays a definitive role in professional learning; the relation of professional experience in school-based contexts provides opportunities for growth that are linked to identified individual and school needs.

Qualitative data collected in a case study from 12 high social teachers identified prevalent themes through interviews and observations using an inductive analysis and coding of categories to identify meaningful professional learning; one of the themes identified was embedded, informal learning (Thacker, 2017). Of the thematic analysis conducted, the study found that context and relevance of strategies, which were embedded in their profession, had significant impact on their professional learning (Thacker, 2017).

The reoccurring understanding of job-embedded professional learning in conjunction with activities educators find meaningful leads to the concept that professional learning is ongoing and requires time. According to Easton (2008b), professional learning should be ongoing and directly applied to the classroom. Researchers summarize that ongoing professional learning needs to extend back to the classroom with teachers inquiring how to utilize these techniques with learners through case studies (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Easton, 2008b). The embedded learning continues with reflection and conferring with colleagues, which can occur in multiple environments (Easton, 2008b; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). The sustainability of new practices requires time that is used adequately to yield improvement in teaching (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Darling-Hammond (2000) reiterated that the capacity to grow is developed through “study, reflection, guided experience, and inquiry” (p. 171), all of

which require time and job-embedded occurrences.

Collaborative Practices

According to researchers, effective professional learning requires the practice of sustained collaboration that engages teachers in ongoing inquiry that is focused on researching impactful strategies, sharing new findings, and solving problems that involve the teaching and learning of students (Balls et al., 2016; Brown & Militello, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hirsch, 2015; Leana, 2011; Lieberman & Miller, 2016). Leana (2011) summarized the concept of social capital as the understanding that individuals perform better when they have strong social links as a resource for professional support and knowledge. Investment in social capital and professional learning begins with the school leader structuring their schools to provide collaborative experiences (Fullan, 2014; Hirsch, 2015; Leana, 2011). Fullan (2016) explained that building social capital through development of relationships in schools establishes strong collaborative cultures that allow for formal feedback to become easier and more purposeful.

Hirsch (2015) explained that the school leader should create avenues for collaborative time to be built in the schedules of schools routinely. Hirsch continued that this allotted time needs to be easily accessible, so teachers feel supported in having time to collaborate about solving problems that are tied to student learning priorities. In correlation, Leana (2011) discussed the current view of the principal as the leader of pedagogical change and that a shift should take place for this role of instructional leader to be effective. Leana stated that effective principals should define their roles as “facilitators of teacher success” (p. 35) where they provide resources to build time, space, and staffing for both formal and informal collaboration to take place. Researchers summarize that reshaping the role of the instructional leader can create optimal

conditions for collegiality to occur, which allows for a culture of collaboration and investment in social capital (Fullan, 2014; Leana, 2011).

According to Desimone (2009), professional learning is more than a workshop; it encompasses multiple experiences ranging from hallway conversations to book studies. Desimone continued that instead of focusing on specific activities for teacher learning to take place, there should be an incorporation of critical features to increase professional learning. Included in those features is collective participation, which involves teachers having an active role in leading their own professional learning and participating in ongoing sharing with colleagues to gain new knowledge (Desimone, 2009). Balls et al. (2016) expanded on this concept by describing that “shared knowledge is best facilitated through conversations, interdisciplinary interactions, and sharing other practices that authenticate the information” (p. 37). The degree of synthesis of this new knowledge is then transferred into new practices; this synthesis cannot take place unless there is the opportunity for formal and informal professional learning along with collective participation (Balls et al., 2016; Desimone, 2009).

Darling-Hammond (2000) discussed the importance of professional learning being embedded in schools where clinical preparation is ongoing, similar to teaching hospitals in medicine where learning in practice is a priority. Within these professional learning schools, structures of inquiry and collaboration are present and supported by school leaders (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Brown and Militello (2016) conducted a mixed-methods study to gain insight of principal perceptions of effective professional learning in schools. Brown and Militello’s study utilized a Q methodology to understand participants’ nature of their points of view; then after examining literature and conducting interviews, over 100 Q statements were created through concourse of reduction and

feedback. In this study, 34 administrators sorted statements to show their degree of agreeance where researchers then analyzed the data to discover professional learning factors that emerged (Brown & Militello, 2016). The factors that emerged included sustained over time, follow up, and collaboration (Brown & Militello, 2016). According to Brown and Militello (2016), the data showed that participants who identified the factor of collaboration as significant emphasized dialogue with peers and establishing cooperative cultures among others as critical components of effective professional learning. Supporting collaborative practices involves the creation of structures that lead to sustaining cultures emphasizing collegiality and focusing on high expectations for student learning (Desimone, 2009; Hirsch, 2015; Leana, 2011).

Teacher Expertise

Utilizing teacher expertise builds upon teacher relationships to support change (Fullan, 2016). According to Easton (2008a), when professional learning begins with teachers identifying needs of schools and opportunities are given to make meaningful decisions about their own professional learning, new pedagogical knowledge and improvements in teaching can be acquired. Hawley and Valli (1999) extended on this understanding by stating, “if teachers are denied input in their own professional development, they are likely to become cynical and detached from school improvement efforts” (p. 139). These considerations bring about the importance of utilizing teacher expertise when conducting professional learning experiences. Easton (2008b) explained that the process of educators identifying their own learning needs and having the opportunity to lead professional learning can have powerful effects on building cultures of continuous learning. Fullan (2007) stated,

Teachers of today and tomorrow need to do much more learning on the job, or in

parallel with it- where they constantly test out, refine, and get feedback on the improvements they make. They need to assess other colleagues in order to learn from them. (p. 297)

This type of learning involves the use of teacher expertise through peer-to-peer professional activities such as informal observations, which can surface new teacher learning (Easton, 2008a). The qualitative study of Thacker (2017) previously discussed, identified peer observations as a “missed opportunity” (p. 46) in teacher informal learning experiences. In this study, the research participants, high school social studies teachers, discussed that observing other teachers allowed for learning from colleague practices, which then informed their own practices (Thacker, 2017). According to Thacker, the teachers of this study discussed that while encouragement may have been given from school leaders to observe others, a lack of time in the work schedule made it difficult. Easton (2008b) reiterated that time is essential for adequate professional learning to take place and that role changes should also occur to capitalize on teacher expertise. According to researchers, the knowledge and expertise teachers have to collaborate and coach one another are considered ongoing, critical aspects of teacher learning (Easton, 2008a, 2008b; Fullan, 2007, 2016; Hawley & Valli, 1999).

Adult Learning Theories

The ways in which educators learn is rooted in theories of adult learning. While research demonstrates common themes that provide insight into how teachers develop, it is also important to understand the principles that establish processes for adults to acquire new knowledge and skills. In schools, much of teacher professional learning focuses on pedagogy. According to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2015), “pedagogy” (p. 19) refers to the science in which children learn. In the model of pedagogy, teachers are

assigned the responsibility for deciding the how, when, and if content has been learned (Knowles et al., 2015). In contrast, the term “andragogy” (p. 4) refers to how adults learn, including the designing and conducting of the learning processes (Knowles et al., 2015). Andragogy focuses on characteristics of the learning transaction, instead of specific objectives, and includes the perspectives of the learner to determine how the learning is conducted (Knowles et al., 2015). Opportunities for adult learning to occur extend beyond the classroom realm; they include both formal and nonformal modes of learning and can occur in varied settings (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Knowles et. al (2015) presented six assumptions of andragogy which may be applied to all adult learning situations, including the teaching profession. These assumptions include the learner’s need to know, self-concept, prior experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation (Knowles et al., 2015). In addition, Drago-Severson (2009) explained four pillars of adult learning for educational settings that lead to increased capacity and potentially synthesis of new knowledge. These pillars are collegial inquiry, mentoring, teaming, and leadership roles. The assumptions and pillars of these adult learning theories describe characteristics and avenues that enable adult learning to be meaningful and effective (Drago-Severson, 2009; Knowles et al., 2015).

Knowles et al.’s (2015) Six Assumptions

Learner’s need to know. Knowles et al. (2015) explained that adults need to know why they need to learn something prior to learning the new knowledge or skill. The relevance of why the knowledge is necessary is critical when presenting to adult learners (Knowles et al., 2015). According to Knowles et al., avenues for adults to gain understanding of their need to know the new information include role models, appraisal

systems, performance assessments, and job rotations. Knowles et al. cited the research of Tough (1979), which concluded that the identification of benefits of the learning brings adult attention to the importance of the learning and establishes attitudes of investment.

Self-concept. Unlike children, adults have sole responsibility for their own decisions and lives; thus, their drive to learn new knowledge is based on self-initiative, not dependency (Knowles et al., 2015). According to Knowles et al. (2015), adults should have developed self-awareness of the importance of the learning at hand and retained responsibility for acquiring and synthesizing the new content as they find it beneficial for their needs. This assumption establishes that the adult learner makes the transition from dependent to self-directed when participating in learning experiences (Knowles et al., 2015).

The role of the educator's experience. Adults have vast experiences that bring different perspectives to their environments; because of these varied experiences, adult learners have different attributions of learning (Knowles et al., 2015). According to Knowles et al. (2015), attributes such as goals, interests, and learning styles emphasize the need for individualized instruction when facilitating adult learning.

Knowles et al. (2015) summarized that learner experiences should be utilized to enhance the learning of the group. Knowles et al. discussed the use of “experiential techniques” (p. 45), which are techniques that bring the experiences of learners to the surface and allow for learning strategies such as simulation exercises, group discussions, and problem-solving activities. Last, Knowles et al. identified the value of taking into account the adult learner experiences by stating that it brings validation to who they are as an individual.

Readiness to learn. Knowles et al. (2015) described adult readiness to learn as

the process of recognizing the value of the new knowledge and realizing this as a significant need in their lives. With this understanding, timing is essential when planning learning experiences to ensure the learner's developmental stage is prepared for the new knowledge or skill. Knowles et al. recognized that at times, it is not conducive to wait for learners to be ready for the experience; thus, you can induce readiness through models of counseling and simulation techniques.

Orientation to learning. Knowles et al. (2015) stated that “adults are life-centered” (p. 46). They feel motivated to learn new knowledge and skills based on their perception of how the new knowledge will help them achieve tasks or solve problems in their work (Knowles et al., 2015). In addition, Knowles et al. described that when learning is situated in real-world contexts, it is more applicable and relatable to the adult learners, which increases their orientation to learning.

Motivation. According to Knowles et al. (2015), adults are primarily motivated by external factors and internal pressures. Knowles et al. cited the work of Tough (1979), who explained that these two motivators lead adult learners to continue to grow and develop through the means necessary. Knowles et al. noted that adults can feel frustrated as students when they face obstacles such as time constraints, inaccessibility to resources, or programs that do not uphold sound principles of adult learning.

Drago-Severson's (2009) Pillars of Adult Learning

Teaming. According to Drago-Severson (2009), teaming provides opportunities for adults to reflect upon and question their own assumptions and participate in dialogue about implementing school visions and initiatives. Teaming engages teachers in conversations that present different perspectives which may challenge their own and allow for synthesis of new assumptions that may not have been previously considered

(Drago-Severson, 2009). Barth (2006) presented four interpersonal collaborations that adults may participate in while working in a school setting.

1. *Parallel play*: Where teachers and administrators remain in their own territories.
2. *Adversarial relationships*: Competition exists among teachers, and best practices and knowledge are not shared.
3. *Congenial relationships*: Social interactions take place that are friendly but do not associate with the growth of the school, teachers, or students.
4. *Collegial relationships*: Where teachers consistently talk about practice, share expertise with others, informally observe one another, and help each other.

Drago-Severson (2009) stated that collegial relationships can be supported through effective teaming; it is mentioned that engagement in these teams requires trust and support strategies such as modeling and reflective practice. Drago-Severson further explained that adults do hold assumptions about their work, and there is a need to acknowledge and address those assumptions. In teaming, discussions should be held that develop adult understanding of pedagogy and examine those assumptions through reflective practice (Drago-Severson, 2009). This process provides opportunities for professional learning to take place and, in turn, potentially reframing those assumptions that need to be revised (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Drago-Severson (2009) presented barriers to teaming which include finding time and effective use of the time to reflect on critical issues of teaching and learning. She continued by summarizing that many times, teaming can result in spending time discussing issues that would be more appropriately resolved during other opportunities such as faculty meetings or one-on-one conferences (Drago-Severson, 2009). According

to Drago-Severson, school leaders can benefit from teaming through building awareness of their own and others' thinking; then once this awareness is built, challenging long-standing norms in their schools that should be revisited.

Drago-Severson (2009) presented four types of teaming that may be in schools and how these teams support adult learning.

1. *Instructional leadership*: These teams create plans and assess progress towards achieving goals that pertain to teaching and learning.
2. *Study and discussion*: These teams meet to discuss pedagogy and observed practices. In addition, adults analyze current practices and offer ideas.
3. *Engagement with outside experts and partnerships with other organizations*: Adults meet with other experts to receive feedback about ideas and learn from different perspectives.
4. *Action research*: This type of teaming involves the investigation of a problem or challenge that is related to teaching and learning. In this type of teaming, adults participate in dialogue about data and gain insights, which later informs their practices.

Last, Drago-Severson (2009) provided conditions that should be recognized when building teams to support learning. Characteristics of teaming that provide conditions for effectiveness include focusing on questioning that encourages collaboration, providing resources like time and data to allow for teaming to occur, and consideration of the roles each member may take (Drago-Severson, 2009). Supporting growth of adults should begin with team structuring and establishing norms that allow for productive collaboration (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Providing adults with leadership roles. Drago-Severson (2009) identified the

importance of providing leadership roles, describing that these roles allow others to benefit from the expertise of others. According to Drago-Severson, these opportunities enable adults in the school community to share power and make decisions that affect their communities. Drago-Severson stated, “I use the phrase ‘providing leadership roles’ rather than the commonly used ‘distributive leadership’ because of the intention behind these roles” (p. 26). She furthered this concept by summarizing that providing leadership roles involves offering support to help the individual grow in the leadership role, rather than just simply assigning tasks (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Leaders employing school personnel to take on leadership roles builds human capacity and, in turn, promotes change (Drago-Severson, 2009). Providing individuals with the right leadership roles invokes growth and shapes adult learners who strengthen the entire school community (Drago-Severson, 2009). According to Drago-Severson (2009), in order for effective growth to take place, it is imperative that individuals are carefully chosen for each role to ensure the leadership opportunity builds on that person’s strengths and provides challenges that help the person grow professionally. When individuals are placed in leadership roles, the school community can benefit in numerous ways including relationship building with other teachers through collaboration, mobilizing purpose to motivate others, and encouraging sharing of ideas to improve instructional practices (Drago-Severson, 2009). Drago-Severson described trust as an important factor when school leaders assign leadership roles; she also stated that principals should invite multiple teachers to assume these roles, rather than the same individuals. Allowing multiple teachers to take leadership roles creates a community of growth by establishing ongoing collaboration through multiple perspectives and acknowledging the exceptional qualities of many in the school (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Danielson (2007) recognized both formal and informal leadership roles as times that enable adults to grow as learners. Informal roles such as taking on initiatives to try new strategies and sharing them with others provide contexts for teachers to grow within their own capacity (Danielson, 2007). Formal roles, which are those such as department chairs and instructional coaches, provide teachers with expertise to enlist others to collaborate and build practices that may lead to necessary change (Danielson, 2007). Furthermore, Drago-Severson (2009) concluded that for those serving in leadership roles, a safe context is created that is a “healthy holding environment” (p. 114) for growth. She discussed that these roles allow individuals to grow more aware of their own beliefs and learn from others’ perspectives (Drago-Severson, 2009). Drago-Severson stated,

Heightening awareness of our assumptions enables us to examine their influence on performance. Through systematic reflection with colleagues, we become better able to view our thinking multiple times through the lenses of others, which can lead to opportunities for transformational learning. (p. 114-115)

In summary, when placed in appropriate leadership roles, adults feel safe to take risks and have ownership in their abilities to lead others (Drago-Severson, 2009). This mindset, in turn, creates a cohesive school environment that experiences growth (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Collegial inquiry. According to Drago-Severson (2009), collegial inquiry is “collaborative reflective practice” (p. 154). She distinguished between reflective practice and collegial inquiry as only one person is necessary to engage in reflective practice, and two or more colleagues are needed to participate in collegial inquiry (Drago-Severson, 2009). Drago-Severson continued by identifying components of effective collegial inquiry as opportunities where one is “purposefully examining and reflecting one’s

assumptions, beliefs, values, commitments, and convictions as part of the learning, teaching, and leadership process” (p. 154). According to Drago-Severson, dialogue is known as investigating issues together in healthy contexts, whereas discussion consists of an individual reiterating one’s view through necessary means rather than exploration of thoughts. In collegial inquiry, the act of dialogue among adults is an essential component, as it allows events to be reviewed through different perspectives which invites alternative ways of thinking (Drago-Severson, 2009). Drago-Severson acknowledged that awareness of one’s own assumptions is not easily obtained; she confirmed that often individuals want to view their perspectives as overly positive. Thus, according to Drago-Severson, the importance of motivation and trust are essential when overcoming this barrier of change in perspective during collegial inquiry.

Drago-Severson (2009) iterated that collegial inquiry is not an occasional meeting that takes place only when issues arise, rather it is a continual engagement in “shared dialogue” (p. 155) that nurtures a culture for school-wide improvement. She continued that collegial inquiry is a component that should be an integral part of the school culture; this culture will reduce working in isolation, improve adult learning, and potentially increase student learning (Drago-Severson, 2009). Drago-Severson summarized opportunities that contribute to this collaborative culture. Those opportunities include

- Inquiry-driven conversations that lead to improved teaching and learning.
- The building of capacities for adults in the school community through shared ownership and decision-making.
- The advocating of time to reflect on important initiatives, raise questions, and provide input.

- The school unit all orientated towards the same vision increased teacher and student learning.

Drago-Severson (2009) described collegial inquiry as a process that, over time, provides context for teachers to not only share but also test alternative strategies in their professions. She noted that validation of new assumptions to result in changed practices is a process that requires time but contended with appropriate support and leadership can take place in school communities (Drago-Severson, 2009). Drago-Severson emphasized that in order for this process of collegial inquiry to occur, specific conditions of place and time should be established, and schedules should be set up for this opportunity (Drago-Severson, 2009). Last, Drago-Severson depicted different practices that school leaders can initiate to engage teachers in collegial inquiry.

- *Reflection through the process of writing*, which involves voluntary free writing to allow for expression of thoughts to provide a spring board for reflection.
- *Reflection through dialogue*, which provides time for adults to grow through giving and receiving feedback in contexts such as book studies, learning walks, and grade-level meetings.
- *Reflection through decision-making*, which initiates ownership for teachers to take part in the school's core decisions and, in turn, build capacity.
- *Reflection through helping and advising others*, which includes teachers leading an inquiry process in activities such as research and introducing new programs. This enables teachers to use their expertise and advise others.

Drago-Severson (2009) concluded that collegial inquiry is “the foundation of the

convening process” (p. 201); this process allows for new assumptions to surface which implicitly and explicitly inform ways of thinking.

Mentoring. Drago-Severson (2009) stated that the role of mentor is the “important responsibility of acting as teacher and protector” (p. 213). She continued that this form of support is one of the oldest forms of human development (Drago-Severson, 2009). According to Drago-Severson, a mentor’s most common task is to help a mentee grow in their careers. Zachary (2000) concluded that the mentor has a unique role of being a role model, guide, and friend; with this understanding, it is critical that this relationship has defined expectations that provide clarity. Zachary suggested these guidelines for developing relationships:

- Setting definitive guidelines for communication, including how and when.
- Be respectful of each other and maintain trust.
- Have shared understandings for confidential information that is shared.

Drago-Severson (2009) identified the reciprocal benefits of these relationships for both mentors and mentees. Those benefits provide opportunities for veteran teachers to grow professionally by sharing their expertise and developing as teacher leaders, which can potentially retain these teachers in schools (Drago-Severson, 2009). In turn, beginning teachers feel supported and learn from the ongoing, embedded professional learning that is applicable to their immediate needs (Drago-Severson, 2009).

As Drago-Severson (2009) explained in the previous pillars, mentoring relationships also create a safe environment for broadening teacher perspectives and encourage them to examine their own assumptions. According to Drago-Severson, mentoring is a more emotional, private relationship that facilitates growth for both

individuals; thus, it is framed to have opportunities for exceptional growth if trust is established. As a person develops professionally, Drago-Severson confirmed that the mentor should be prepared to release the mentee so they may propel towards new ways of knowing. Drago-Severson referred to this concept as the “growing edge” (p. 221), one of the structures of mentorship that prepares the individual to think alternatively with perspectives that challenge the mentee. As mentoring is a practice that encourages the growth of experienced and new teachers alike, it also builds shared leadership in schools and strengthens interpersonal relationships among staff (Drago-Severson, 2009). As mentoring works with the other pillars interrelatedly, investment in school initiatives and a culture of supported adult learning is built (Drago-Severson, 2009).

A study conducted by Drago-Severson and Pinto (2006) identified the integration of human resource strategies that foster teacher learning and reduce teacher isolation in schools. This qualitative study researched a sample of 25 school leaders to gain insight about how these diverse school contexts utilized resources available and the role that leadership played in supporting adult learning (Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006). In this study, the school missions, financial resource levels, and principal perceptions were all examined to devise themes through a grounded theory approach that utilized coding and analytic memos in response to questions asked to each participant (Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006). The results of this study indicated that principals exercise their leadership to reduce isolation and foster growth through hiring, mentoring, and allocating time by utilizing substitutes so teachers can engage in collegial inquiry (Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006). These three components of human resources were said to provide time for shared reflection, emotional support of teachers, and pursuit of professional growth opportunities (Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006). According to Drago-Severson and Pinto, the contexts

of the school greatly influence school needs; and leaders should consider their mission, teacher needs, and how the community will respond to initiatives in place when considering reform. The research did indicate that “learning-orientated school leadership” (Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006, p. 151) provides avenues for teachers to work together and build capacity in schools.

Bandura’s (1977b, 1997, 1999) Social Cognitive and Self-Efficacy Theories

Social cognitive theory lies deeply within the constructs of self-awareness and how learning is influenced by modeled activities and experiences (Bandura, 1977a, 1999). Bandura (1999) stated, “the recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest in self-referent phenomena” (p. 2). This understanding builds upon Bandura’s theories of observational learning and the impacts of self-reflection and adjustment of actions based on this reflection (Bandura, 1999). Many personal factors play a significant role in our processing of experiences and how we are motivated in our everyday lives (Bandura, 1999). Individuals have power over their own actions; and while actions are influenced by experiences, they are also influenced by social situations (Bandura, 1999). Bandura (1999) explained that the human mind can attend to purposeful processing of information that leads to decisions which establish personal identity. Social cognitive theory goes beyond the simple exposure of events. Bandura (1999) described it as the “agentic action in exploring, manipulating, and influencing the environment” (p. 4). With this understanding, the brain goes through different processes during observational learning. Those processes include attentional processes, retention processes, and motivational processes (Bandura, 1977b). According to Bandura (1977b), when the person participates in these processes, assimilation of observed events takes place and is coded in the mind to guide future actions.

Bandura (1997) stated that “efficacy beliefs are structured by experience and reflective thought rather than being simply a disjointed collection of highly specific self-beliefs” (p. 51). Bandura (1997) linked the judgment of one’s self to expected outcomes. The theory of self-efficacy identifies that one’s personal beliefs of what they can achieve can influence their abilities to accomplish it and that those perceptions of ability are constructed through experiences and the synthesis of knowledge following the occasion (Bandura, 1997). Defining self-concept plays a pivotal role in the understanding of attitudes and how these attitudes affect a person’s life (Bandura, 1997).

These processes of social cognitive theory guide a person’s behavior and influences actions, which result in newfound knowledge and skills (Bandura, 1977b). These constructs of the social cognitive theories were the foundational framework of this study of teacher-led professional experiences. Specifically, it examined the role these theories played in self-efficacy and how teachers learned from each other in this study.

Observational Learning in Social Cognitive Theory

Attentional processes. New behaviors are learned either through direct experiences or by observing others (Bandura, 1977b). Bandura (1977b) stated that due to the adverse consequences that can be associated with direct engagement, many human behaviors are learned through modeling. Observation of others greatly influences our own actions and provides guidance for next steps (Bandura, 1977b). Attentional processes play a definitive role in what we as individuals chose to observe and attend to when observing (Bandura, 1977b). Bandura (1997) stated that “attentional processes determine what is selectively observed in the profusion of modeling influences and what information is extracted from ongoing modeled events” (p. 89). With this understanding, an individual’s cognitive skills and perceptions play a definitive role in what the observer

considers valuable (Bandura, 1997). Because the outcome of observational learning relies upon the characteristics the individual chooses to observe, if relevant characteristics are not those selected as ones to attend to, the outcome may not be beneficial (Bandura 1997).

Bandura (1977b) stated that the group in which an individual is associated can delimit the behaviors learned. Some social groups demand more attention than others, which can alter the degree of effectiveness of observational learning (Bandura, 1977b). Other limitations include the quality of the model being observed and the interpersonal attraction the individual has (Bandura, 1977b); thus, in order for observational learning to be effective, it is imperative for the modeling to be engaging and have characteristics the observer finds pleasing (Bandura, 1977b). In addition, Bandura (1977b) elaborated that the observer's perception plays a role in the effectiveness of the attentional process of observational learning. The observer will intrinsically derive from past experiences to make interpretations of what they see and hear, which, in turn, will influence what they learn (Bandura, 1977b).

Retention processes. The use of symbolism is a critical component of the retention process (Bandura, 1977b). Bandura (1977b) concluded that modeling may not be as effective if the individual does not develop an avenue to remember it. Transitory modeling aids in committing experiences to memory, but it is the symbolization that allows individuals to learn the behaviors through observation (Bandura, 1977b). According to Bandura (1999), symbols are utilized to transform transient experiences into knowledge that individuals can then use as their own models of action. The symbolization of experiences brings meaning and structure to events that allow individuals to thrive (Bandura, 1999).

Bandura (1977b) stated there are two representations that contribute to observational learning: imaginal and verbal. In imaginal observational learning, the mind produces perceptions of events after repeated exposure to the modeling; a correlation is made to the modeling of the event and future interactions which creates a reoccurring image for the individual (Bandura, 1977b). The second type of retention process, verbal coding, determines that individuals create verbal codes after they have observed modeled events (Bandura, 1977b). These symbols are created in response to the synthesis of the knowledge learned through modeling; individuals visualize themselves modeling the behavior which increases proficiency and retention (Bandura, 1977b).

Motivational processes. Bandura (1977b) discussed that while many observations may take place, people do not adopt all modeled behaviors; rather, they adopt those behaviors that they value as an individual and feel will most readily benefit them. Individuals are motivated by three incentive motivators: direct, vicarious, and self-produced (Bandura, 1999). Observing others benefitting from modeled patterns motivates individuals to move forward and develop behaviors they find bring personal satisfaction to them (Bandura, 1999). According to Bandura (1999), when others are observed achieving meaningful goals by their sustained efforts, motivation to obtain the same beneficial outcomes becomes conceivable.

Vicarious experiences motivate individuals to persist in their efforts and create expectations for themselves (Bandura, 1977b). Bandura (1977b) elaborated that observing others vicariously encourages the individual to at least attempt the new model, once they see others attempt it without adverse consequences. According to Bandura (1999), much learning can occur from either intentionally or unintentionally observing others in their own environment.

Creative modeling. Bandura (1999) stated, “modeling is not simply a process of response mimicry as commonly believed” (p. 33). Once the modeled behavior occurs, higher order thinking takes place and observers create their own meaning, thus creating new behaviors that extend upon what they have observed (Bandura, 1999). Creative observers take from various observed models and adapt the models to create methodologies that bring about new perspectives (Bandura, 1999).

Investigation of Teaching Practices in Observational Learning

While there is little research that relates specifically to teacher learning in social cognitive theory and its processes of observational learning, educational research has brought understanding of teacher investigations of practice. Investigation of practices involves reflection and learning through observation, which coincides with Bandura’s observational learning process (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Elmore, 2000; Hawley & Valli, 1999).

According to Ball and Cohen (1999), development of practices requires the conception of learning through professional performance. In order for teachers to learn, they must have engagement with tasks and experiences that are fundamental to their practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Ball and Cohen stated that “to learn more than mere imitation or survival, such experiences also must be sufficiently distanced to be open to careful scrutiny, unpacking, reconstruction, and the like” (p. 12). As Bandura (1999) summarized, modeling is more complex than mimicry; it requires deeper understanding that brings relevance to the learner. Ball and Cohen stated that strategic documentation of practice provides avenues for teachers to analyze work and present relevant problems of practices. The understanding that professional practices and work are selected and analyzed provides pathways for teachers to reflect and modify practices based on newly

acquired knowledge (Ball & Cohen, 1999).

According Ball and Cohen (1999), the analysis and investigation of practices would not be adequately developed without the engagement of professional discourse. During effective professional discourse, professional growth can take place through communication of ideas and development of analytic tools that lead to improvement in professional learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Bandura (1977b) stated that psychologically, motivational processes can encourage others to adopt beneficial behaviors when observing others directly or when they vicariously experience another individual attempting a new practice or achieving a new goal. In education, these motivational experiences are brought to the surface through engagement of analysis of teaching practices and sharing of expertise (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Hawley & Valli, 1999). Elmore (2000) stated that opportunities to be exposed to ideas and arguing them based on their own philosophies along with observing and practicing newly obtained behaviors are critical to educator success. Fullan (2007) expanded on these ideals by summarizing that teachers think systemically about their practices and learn from experiences. These perspectives stem from the abilities to examine their own practices, seek advice from other professionals, and take risks that potentially adapt their teaching practices (Fullan, 2007). These processes explained by Fullan (2007) aligned with the higher order thinking processes of Bandura's (1999) observational learning which stated that creative modeling requires the observer to think critically about what they have observed and create their own understandings to make connections of how this new knowledge can apply to their own practices.

According to Kennedy (1999), while teachers may be persuaded by another colleague's idea and consider adopting that process, they will not understand how to act

upon the idea without observation or an initial frame of reference. Kennedy (1999) continued to build on this concept by discussing the concept of “situated knowledge” (p. 71), which is knowledge that is processed and learned through specific situations rather than abstractly. It is situated knowledge combined with shared experiences that develops teachers’ common language and collaborative culture (Kennedy, 1999). These concepts of situated knowledge and shared experiences align with Bandura’s (1977a) motivational processes which stated that while an individual may observe many different behaviors, only those they find meaningful will have a lasting impact and motivate the individual to change their practices.

Self-Efficacy Theory

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is the “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). With this understanding, Bandura (1997) explained that self-efficacy is embedded in the thinking that humans undergo where they attempt to acquire mastery of skills and concepts. Multiple influences play definitive roles in how individuals develop and shape their efficacy. These influences include goal setting, intrinsic motivation, and setting (Bandura, 1997).

Self-Efficacy and its Role in Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory provides a structure of knowledge which entails strategies that one can undergo to construct “complex modes of behavior” (Bandura, 1997, p. 34). One such knowledge structure formed from social cognitive theory, observational learning, was previously discussed (Bandura, 1997). These structures provide cognitive processes of thinking during the beginning stages of developing a new skill (Bandura, 1997). Perceived self-efficacy plays a role in social cognitive theory by influencing a

person's choice of activities and motivation to achieve the task or goal (Bandura, 1997).

According to Bandura (1997), this is a different set of determinants, yet an important part of "the acquisition of the knowledge structures on which skills are founded" (p. 35).

Once a skill has been mastered and becomes a part of one's routine, the attentional needs to use these cognitive structures lessen, thus their perceived efficacy also requires less reflection (Bandura, 1997).

Self-Efficacy and Intrinsic Motivation

Bandura (1997) discussed the role of "self-referent thought" (p. 37), which activates processes of the brain including cognitive, motivational, and affective. These processes work to move knowledge and skills into actions that are mastered (Bandura, 1997). The role of perceived self-efficacy focuses on what you, as an individual, believe you can do under various circumstances (Bandura, 1997). One's intrinsic motivation to develop skills is of importance when growing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), a person must have a degree of self-interest in acquiring this skill or knowledge as well as confidence to accomplish it. Bandura (1997) stated, "It is the self-satisfaction derived from personal triumphs over lofty peaks that provides the exhilaration" (p. 219). With this understanding, personal significance and investment in the skill or attainment of knowledge propel one to tie these factors to their own personal standards and continue to pursue the challenge (Bandura, 1997).

Self-Efficacy and Personal Goals

To develop cognitively does require sustainment in structured activities that provide mastery experiences and intrinsically motivate (Bandura, 1997). Personal goals can provide motivation for an individual if they are timed appropriately (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) discussed expectations when setting goals, stating that short-term goals

provide opportunities for incentives that are close to one's current needs, while long-term goals are too far removed to influence personal motivation (Bandura, 1997). Thus, Bandura (1997) recognized the use of subgoals when setting distant goals to ensure self-motivation is maintained. Combining subgoals with a long-term goal enables the individual to identify "rising indicants" (p. 217) of performance to grow a sense of self-efficacy throughout the process (Bandura, 1997). Ensuring subgoals are attainable while making sure they are not trivial is key when developing timelines (Bandura, 1997).

According to Bandura (1997), individuals who do set goals are more likely to achieve improvement over individuals who do not set goals. In addition, the act of goal setting provides motivation to outperform past accomplishments and visualize progress as opposed to the end product (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) stated that "people can be acquiring skills but deriving little sense of efficacy because of the wide disparity between current attainment and distal standards" (p. 217); therefore, the use of frequent feedback affirms one's growth and is an important factor in increasing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Efficacy in Schools

According to Bandura (1997), because teachers work in a complex climate that is consistently interacting in social systems, self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in the collective efficacy of schools. The conditions of educational systems that present numerous demands of achievement and evaluation lead to conditions that may reduce teacher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) identified attributes of efficacious schools which include principals who are instructional leaders and seek resources to improve instruction, teachers who hold high expectations for student academic growth, and teachers who have a resilient mindset. These attributes are acquired when the

teachers have confidence to master their profession or have an increased sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Bandura (1997) examined the study of Gibson and Dembo (1984) to identify correlations to efficacy in the teacher profession. Gibson and Dembo conducted a study of 208 elementary school teachers using a factor analysis of a 30-item teacher efficacy scale as well as class observations to investigate Bandura's (1997) model of efficacy. Gibson and Dembo found two factors that relate to Bandura's (1997) model. The first factor is that teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy feel personal responsibility for their students' success (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). The second factor is the belief that external factors such as home environment and family background do play a role in teacher beliefs of what they feel they can achieve (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

Bandura (1997) reiterated this concept by explaining that teacher personal efficacy is identified in "separate dimensions of environmental qualities in studies of school climate" (p. 247). Bandura (1997) continued to affirm that the school environment can affect teacher efficacy to increase student learning, and some of these factors are attributed to student characteristics and their family background. With this understanding, belief systems of staff contribute to the development of school culture and have positive or negative effects on perceived efficacy of the group (Bandura, 1997).

Conclusion

Throughout this literature review, traditional and current constructs of professional learning and teacher development have been analyzed. In addition, relevant theories of adult learning were summarized to bring forth the most current understandings of andragogy and ways in which adults synthesize knowledge. Aspects of social cognitive and self-efficacy theory were explored to provide foundational support of this

study, which measured teacher self-efficacy.

While relevant literature has contributed to individual elements of teacher development and models of professional learning, it has not specifically studied how teachers learn when provided leadership opportunities to facilitate their own learning. This study examined not only how teachers chose to learn but also their reactions to this type of learning and its impact on efficacy. This study of teacher-led professional experiences contributed to the current literature of teacher development and provided new insight of how teachers learn as adults when guiding their learning autonomously. The next chapter outlines how this study was conducted. The qualitative method of grounded theory research was used to facilitate this study to derive emergent themes about this phenomenon.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

While professional development has been researched extensively in the education field, past and current models of professional learning have not utilized the embedded facilitation of teacher-led professional experiences in their practices. Little to no research has been conducted with regard to teacher-led professional experiences and their impact on efficacy. To effectively measure teacher efficacy and development during these professional experiences, qualitative research methods have been applied. Those qualitative methods included observations, interviews, and focus groups. These qualitative practices provided deep insight of participant thought processes that were analyzed to develop understandings and connections of the variables.

General Methodology

The research for this study was an ethnographic study. According to Charmaz (2014), ethnography means involving one's self in the setting of a group where you are studying the lives of the individuals and their actions through sustained observations and other means of data collection. She continued to state that the major purpose of ethnographic studies "focuses on learning about events and actions in specific settings and situations as they unfold" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 36). Within this ethnographic study, the grounded theory approach was implemented. Denscombe (2014) described the grounded theory approach in the following way:

Grounded theory is an approach dedicated to generating theories. In this sense it contrasts with approaches concerned with testing theories, and is different from research whose main purpose is to provide descriptive accounts of subject matter. Grounded theory is an approach that emphasizes the importance of empirical

fieldwork and the need to link any explanations very closely to what happens in practical situations in “the real world.” (p. 107)

Charmaz (2014) concluded that researchers begin the grounded theory approach by identifying opportunities to immerse themselves in data and create systematic processes to gather these data. According to Charmaz, the process of gathering “rich data” (p. 23), which are data that have extensive, detailed descriptions, provides the basis for potential generation of theories. Denscombe (2014) stated that the grounded theory approach requires the researcher to embark on the study without any “fixed ideas” (p. 109) and maintain an open mind. As opposed to collecting data and then allowing the data to explain the theory, the grounded theory approach is rooted in the analysis of data where theories are generated based on the findings (Denscombe, 2014). This approach requires the collection of data throughout the entire course of research until a point where new data collected only confirm existing analyses and do not add any new information (Denscombe, 2014). According to Charmaz, grounded theorists collect data and conduct analyses simultaneously, adapting as the research evolves. Thus, the use of data that are unstructured is optimal for this unique qualitative method, as it provides the flexibility to draw from data and develop new concepts as needed (Charmaz, 2014; Denscombe, 2014). This method allows for theories to be generated based on the opportunities of data collection through open-ended means, which leave avenues for participants to guide the research (Denscombe, 2014).

Although the data collection process allows for flexibility, structure is provided in the analyses stage. This type of qualitative research requires the methods of coding and categorizing data throughout the collection process, compelling the researcher to refine their data to increase understanding as the study continues (Charmaz, 2014). With this

understanding, utilization of stages of coding was facilitated including initial or “open” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 112) and axial coding. Each type of coding is explained in more detail later in this chapter; these stages of coding are designed to derive themes that may lead to potential theories or concepts (Denscombe, 2014).

Grounded theory approach was appropriate for this study because opportunities were available for fluid data collection of teacher interactions, detailed insight of their needs for learning, and perceptions of their efficacy levels during these professional experiences. The researcher’s role in this study was to observe while participants were in their settings and facilitate interviews along with a focus group to gain insight. It is understood that the researcher needed ongoing access to the setting in the grounded theory approach in order to collect data regularly (Charmaz, 2014; Denscombe, 2014). Charmaz (2014) stated that during the data collection process, the researcher will continue to “grapple” (p. 106) with data when analyzing to find emergent ideas that lead to further data collection. In grounded theory research, continual access to the research site broadens the inquiry process, as data continue to be collected until no new indicators arise from the research (Charmaz, 2014); thus, according to Denscombe (2014), “an increased depth of focus” (p. 110) would be achieved from the sample due to the opportunity to allow information to continue to emerge as needed.

Because this ethnographic study of teacher-led professional experiences and efficacy was based on teacher perceptions and processes they undergo to grow in their professions, this methodology allowed for ample data collection and broad initial coding that was then narrowed based on further data analyses (Denscombe, 2014). During the analyses of data, the constant comparative method of the grounded theory approach was applied to provide the integration of categories under simple headings, which later

provided clarification of theories developed through comparison to previous codes (Denscombe, 2014). The process required the researcher to remain true to the data and not move away from the data at hand, as it was consistently being collected through multiple qualitative methods (Charmaz, 2014; Denscombe, 2014).

This method was suitable for this study, as it was unknown how teachers would react to this new phenomenon of teacher-led learning experiences and the impact, if any, it would have on teacher efficacy. Therefore, it was valuable to employ the grounded theory approach to investigate all aspects of these variables and their possible generation of theories.

Research Site and Participants

For this study, teachers were in their natural professional settings, which allowed for authenticity and relevance, a necessary component of the grounded theory approach (Denscombe, 2014). Participants for this study taught in a rural, traditional middle school which consisted of Grades 6-8. A well-developed grounded theory study has a sample from a wide range of individuals who are relevant to the study; this allows for an emergence of data to unfold as participants engage in the study (Denscombe, 2014). Therefore, the study of teacher-led professional experiences included 21 teachers from four core subject areas whose years of experience and areas of expertise varied. Table 1 shows the participants of the study and descriptive characteristics of each teacher. Pseudo names were used for confidentiality purposes.

Table 1

Summary of Participants

Pseudo Name	Subject Taught	Years of Experience
Alice	Language Arts	9
Amy	Math and Language Arts	14
Anne	Science	14
Callie	Language Arts	10
Donna	Language Arts	6
Emma	Exceptional Children's	34
Eve	Science	2
Frank	Science	3
Hannah	Math	4
Jay	Social Studies	9
Joe	Social Studies	24
Joy	Science	5
Karla	Exceptional Children's	9
Katie	Language Arts	2
Lois	Math	12
Lucy	Social Studies	5
Mark	Science	11
Marty	Math	1
Nancy	Math	20
Rhonda	Math	1
Susan	Language Arts	4

Procedures and Instruments

This study was approximately six months in length where teachers facilitated and led their own professional learning in groups of two to four teachers. The participants were grouped across grade level to allow for collaboration outside of their day-to-day cohorts. Participants worked together throughout a portion of the 10-month school year conducting their own learning about a topic of interest in the education field they had chosen as meaningful and necessary for their professional learning needs.

Participants chose their topic of learning based on their completed self-assessment from the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES). Prior to beginning this research, as a part of the procedures set forth by North Carolina Department of Public

Instruction, teachers completed their self-assessments individually. Participants selected an element from standards three or four of this rubric to further their knowledge and engage in their own professional learning. In the self-assessment rubric, standards three and four address the 21st century teaching skills of teachers as well as methods educators employ to facilitate learning in their classrooms. Time was made available through school-wide, subject-specific professional learning days for teachers to conduct their own learning and later in the year to present their acquired knowledge to the remaining teachers of the same subject area. During the professional learning time, teachers utilized a reflection guide to document their learning. The reflection guides used for each professional learning day can be found in Appendix A.

For this qualitative study, data were collected around the following research questions.

1. How do teacher-led professional experiences impact teacher efficacy?
2. In teacher-led professional experiences, how do teachers choose to learn, and how does that impact the way we approach adult learning?

Since grounded research approach was utilized for this study, no predetermined hypotheses were generated (Hansen, 2005); rather, data were collected and constantly analyzed until the criteria were met for conclusion or until the data were considered “saturated” (Hansen, 2005, p. 271). Ruona (2005) cited the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) who provided the following guidelines for this criterion: “exhaustion of resources,” “saturation of categories,” “emergence of regularities,” and “overextension” (p. 238).

The data collection methods used for this research included observations, a focus group, and interviews. The use of this triangular method allowed for constant

comparison through more than one modality and recursive analyses to understand what emerged in the data (Ruona, 2005). The use of these qualitative data methods was conducted in the following three stages.

Stage One

Observations of professional learning experiences were conducted. During the first 2 professional learning days, four different observations took place, observing and recording four different partner groups of varying subject areas. No later than the conclusion of 2 of these professional learning days, interviews were conducted with nine participants until “theoretical adequacy” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 107) was met. These interviews were conducted using open-ended questions with the intent to explore participant views of the experiences at the initial point in the study (Charmaz, 2014). The initial interview questions can be found in Appendix B. Upon conclusion of these interviews and observations, initial coding of these data took place to gain understanding of the themes or categories that may have derived from the research (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) summarized that in grounded theory research, data are collected and analyzed concurrently to provide direction for theories that may potentially be derived. This initial stage of research was conducted to provide this direction.

Stage Two

Observations of professional learning experiences continued for the remainder of the 2 professional learning days. Again, during stage two, four different observations along with recordings took place, observing four partner groups of varying subject areas. In addition, a focus group was conducted. This focus group was utilized to provide insight of the teacher-to-teacher interactions that took place during the discussions. The focus group consisted of eight teachers from across subject areas. The questions that

were asked during the focus group can be found in Appendix C. Throughout this stage, coding continued to take place. The constant comparative method was utilized to compare the initial stage of data to data collected in stage two (Charmaz, 2014; Denscombe, 2014).

Stage Three

In stage three, post interviews were conducted, utilizing the nine interview participants from stage one. These interviews were conducted after 3 allocated professional learning days had taken place. These interview questions sought to be more centralized based on theoretical sampling from the previous analyses conducted (Charmaz, 2014). According to Charmaz (2014), “theoretical sampling is strategic, specific, and systematic” (p. 199). This final stage of data collection aimed to cumulate data and refine categories that were not yet established from previous data analyses (Charmaz, 2014). It is important to note that interview questions for this stage of the research were not developed until stage one was complete and initial coding had taken place. The final interview questions can be found in Appendix D. It is imperative in theoretical sampling that examination of initial ideas takes place to inquire about relationships that may emerge between categories (Charmaz, 2014).

Data Analyses

The qualitative data collected for this study were analyzed using systematic coding; as coding was conducted, data were categorized to identify emerging themes (Ruona, 2005). According to Ruona (2005), a code is a label that represents a pattern noticed in the data. Boyatzis (1998) identified five elements he believed make a sound code.

1. A label that is clear and meaningful. It should also be close to the data

obtained.

2. Characteristics of what the theme entails.
3. Descriptions that tell you when and how the theme arises in the data.
4. Descriptions of qualifications and exclusions to identifying the theme.
5. Examples of what would and would not be considered a potential coding of the themes.

The codes used included initial and axial coding. The data were analyzed at the starting point of the research, stages one and two, to identify initial codes of the data. Once initial coding took place, data collected in stages two and three were continually analyzed and coded using the constant-comparative method (Charmaz, 2014; Denscombe, 2014). According to Denscombe (2014), axial coding is the process of linking initial codes under broader codes and headings that are seen as critical, which shifts the research to what would be considered key components. Once continuous axial coding has taken place and no new data emerge, emerging theories can be formed (Denscombe, 2014). In summary, the overall steps of coding included initial coding, coding application, coding comparison, and revision (Hansen, 2005).

In grounded theory research, Hansen (2005) established that data should be reviewed and coded in an ongoing state to identify the need for potential changes in the sample. This understanding was considered for this study; and if new data needs occurred, additional participants would have interviewed from this extensive sample and new focus groups would have been formed in response to the data needs (Hansen, 2005).

Limitations and Delimitations

While this study is carefully designed to reduce limitations, it is important to note that, as with any study, potential limitations exist. The most prominent limitation is that

the research site where the data were collected was a site in which the researcher worked. There are potential risks of the study being conducted where the researcher works, but the research was designed to minimize bias as much as possible. The nature of this ethnographic study required consistent collection and review of data. Therefore, the study being conducted where the researcher was routinely present allowed for thorough and proper collection of data. Additionally, the amount of time that was available for the research collection was approximately six months. While it would have been ideal to set an indefinite time frame, potential inconsistencies in data collection due to school year cycles and possible teacher turn-over resonates that the research should have cumulated within this time period to ensure validity in the research sample. Last, a delimitation of this study was that it was intentionally set in North Carolina and only in one middle school. This allowed for the study to be obtainable for the researcher's purposes, but it did potentially limit to whom the grounded theory could apply, at least until additional studies can be conducted in other educational settings.

Summary

In this study, the use of qualitative methods in a grounded theory approach initiated research that developed emergent theories of how educators engage in professional learning when provided autonomy and the impact these experiences had on efficacy. The research gathered through this methodology provided context for an in-depth focus of the needs of adult learners and the learning processes in which teachers engage when provided the independence to do so. Last, this research methodology required the construct of open-ended research that allows for fluidity throughout the collection and analyses process (Denscombe, 2014). This construct was ideal for this study, as an open mind was necessary since there is little to no research about teacher-led

professional experiences. Upon collection of data, analyses derived potential theories about this phenomenon to understand any connections between teacher-led professional experiences and efficacy.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Over the years, research has been conducted in the field of professional development, searching for the most effective ways to reach educators. In the midst of 21st century teaching and learning, this concept is still visited. As students continue to transform, understanding the most effective avenues to develop teachers is critical for student achievement and longevity of educators in this vital profession. While this study explored professional development, it was from a different perspective, modifying the approach to educator development. The purpose of this study was to examine how teacher efficacy is impacted when they lead their own professional learning. In this study, teachers were the leaders of their own professional experiences, given the opportunity to guide their own learning. A grounded theory methodology was used to collect data for this study, with the aim of developing theories to inform school leaders of this model's impact on efficacy as well as contributions to adult learning.

Overview of the Applied Method

The grounded theory approach is a structure that emphasizes allowing the data to unfold potential findings as the method is applied (Charmaz, 2014; Denscombe, 2014). Immersion in the setting and continual access to the research sample allows for data to continually surface and findings to emerge throughout the stages of the study (Denscombe, 2014). Understanding of how teachers would respond to this phenomenon of teacher-led professional learning was unknown; thus, applying this methodology proved to be valuable in reaching the depth of study necessary to identify how teachers develop with this process.

This was an entirely qualitative study where data were analyzed through multiple

stages of analytical coding. The generation of data was based exclusively on data coded from teacher responses and interactions in multiple modalities to include discussions during the professional learning, interviews, and a focus group. All of these interactions were recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy of data collected. The grounded theory approach allows the researcher to collect data with fluidity, enabling the course of the research to be determined as data are gathered (Charmaz, 2014; Denscombe, 2014); therefore, as data were analyzed throughout the study, emerging theories were identified and further explored to provide in-depth understanding of the research questions posed (Charmaz, 2014).

Research Questions Posed

The research questions presented for this study sought to develop understanding of how teacher-led professional experiences impact efficacy, in addition to examining the ways in which teachers chose to learn and its influences on adult learning. Data were gathered for the following research questions.

1. How do teacher-led professional experiences impact teacher efficacy?
2. In teacher-led professional experiences, how do teachers choose to learn, and how does that impact the way we approach adult learning?

Research Site and Participants

Participants for this study teach in a rural, traditional middle school of Grades 6-8. Core subject teachers of this school teach three 90-minute blocks of instruction. The middle school in this study has approximately 570 students enrolled and is considered a low-income school in North Carolina. There were a vast number of participants to allow a variety of data to emerge, creating ample opportunities for data to occur from the chosen setting (Denscombe, 2014). Twenty-three teachers of varying experience

participated in this study, which included three social studies teachers, five science teachers, five language arts teachers, one math and language arts teacher, six math teachers, and three exceptional children's teachers. Participants were randomly selected for participation in all aspects of the research to reduce biases and ensure validity of data collected. This ethnographic study lasted 6 months, where this phenomenon of teacher-led professional experiences was examined in the participants' natural work setting of their schools where they taught.

Structure and Instruments Used

For this phenomenon study, teachers were partnered in groups of two to three to facilitate their own professional learning. Teachers chose their own professional learning topic for these days based on their professional self-assessment from NCEES, specifically selecting from standards three and four of the rubric. Time was allotted throughout the school year, distributed into 4 professional learning days where teachers met with their same-subject colleagues. During these allocated days, the researcher observed teacher learning processes and dialogue. Throughout the 6-month study, teachers were interviewed twice and a focus group was held to develop potential theories of this phenomenon.

Stages of Research

A triangular method was used to allow for data to occur in multiple facets so analysis could be recurrent, which allows for effective comparison and appropriate emergence of data (Ruona, 2005). The three stages included more than one modality of data collection to provide an extensive sample. This, in turn, offered an abundance of data that enabled the researcher to effectively code and derive the direction of the study as it surfaced (Charmaz, 2014; Denscombe, 2014). This process was critical to the

success of the study, as little to no research has been collected about this topic; therefore, an open mind to all potential theories was essential (Denscombe, 2014). Table 2 summarizes the stages used during each stage of data collection.

Table 2

Stages of Data Collection

Stage One	During the first 2 professional learning days, four observations took place and discussions were recorded. Initial interviews were also conducted of nine randomly selected participants where their views of the experience were explored. These interviews and discussions were then coded to identify initial categories that arose, and final interview questions and focus group questions were established based on the initial findings.
Stage Two	Four additional observations and recorded discussions continued for the last 2 professional learning days. A focus group was conducted, consisting of eight participants who were randomly selected. This focus group was recorded. The data from this stage were then compared to the data from stage one to continue to analyze the emergence of potential theories.
Stage Three	Final interviews were conducted at the conclusion of the third professional learning day with the initial nine participants from stage one. Questions asked in these interviews were created based on data collected in stage one to further examine initial categories that emerged early in the research.

Interview Questions Development

According to Charmaz (2014), for grounded theory research, interview questions should be open ended to gain initial insight to participant perceptions of the experience. Thus, for this study, initial interview questions were aligned to the research questions posed but were also broad to elicit beginning thoughts about the phenomenon. Once these interviews took place, initial coding was completed to derive the direction of the study (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). From these initial categories, new interview questions were formed. During these initial coding processes, a new potential finding emerged: contributions to teacher development. Therefore, to further explore this

category, final interview questions were also included about teacher development to capture additional findings during this study. Table 3 provides examples of how questions were formulated during data collection from the beginning stage to the final stage of the study.

Table 3

Development of Final Interview Questions

Initial Interview Question	Research Alignment	Initial Code Analysis	Final Interview Question
Have you and your partner set any goals during this professional experience?	Efficacy	Callie 140: Individual set goal to implement new projects in class and attend collaborative, county-wide meetings.	You had set the goal of _____ at the end of the first professional day in October. Do you feel you accomplished this goal? If so, why do you feel this goal was accomplished? If not, why do you feel this goal was not accomplished?
What avenues have you and your partner decided to take for learning about your chosen topic?	Adult Learning	Lucy 105, 107: Topic was critical thinking skills, participant chose to read one book, then was inspired by her reading, and requested the companion book.	When you revisited this learning initiative over multiple sessions, did your approach to learning change? If so, how did it change? If not, why did you decide to maintain this same method?
How would you describe these first two professional learning experiences?	Teacher Development	Donna 35: This process initially enabled her to reflect on her own strengths and weaknesses to determine her professional learning needs.	Did this process engage you to grow professionally? If so, how did this process engage you differently?

According to Hansen (2005), no predetermined hypotheses are established in the grounded theory methodology. Since little to no research has been conducted about teacher-led professional experiences, this question development process enabled the researcher to let the data determine the course of the study based on participant responses (Charmaz, 2014). Initial categories established final interview questions, which later derived theories.

Coding of Data to Theory Development

According to Saldaña (2016), a code is a captured word, phrase, or dialogue that represents an important point or interpretation that may potentially lead to further analysis. For this grounded theory study, three stages of systematic coding took place to derive themes that emerged from the data which included initial, focused, and axial. When coding data for this study, cyclical data immersion was necessary as the themes were to be derived solely from analytic coding within the transcribed data (Charmaz, 2014). Each stage of coding used in this research was intended to provide more definitive paths for categories and later theory development. The research questions developed for this study determined the types of coding that were utilized. According to Saldaña, epistemological questions that develop “an understanding of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 70) provide research about participant thought processes and insight. The three coding methods that were used in this study (initial, focused, and axial) are identified as those that explore these epistemologies and generate the types of answers needed for the research questions posed in this study (Saldaña, 2016). The processes used in the three stages of coding are described below.

Initial coding. During this first cycle of coding, important phrases were identified and assigned labels through line-by-line coding of the transcribed data

(Saldaña, 2016). Initial coding was completed after the initial interviews took place and the first four observations were completed. During this process, within these identified codes, potential groupings of phrases were organized, and initial categories were created for further analyses (Saldaña, 2016).

Focused coding. This type of coding aims to search for recurrent and significant codes that create definitive categories within the data (Saldaña, 2016). During this process, phrases with their assigned codes are sorted under the researcher's identified headings (Saldaña, 2016). In this study, at the conclusion of the second and third stages of data collection, new codes were added from subsequent interviews and the focus group. Those codes were then compared to coding from stage one (Denscombe, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). Categories were then created and revised from stage one (Denscombe, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). Focused coding was implemented during stages two and three to develop categories from the data that were identified as reoccurring and important as they pertained to the research questions posed. The focused codes for these assigned categories were arranged in tables, which included their identified codes and transcribed quotes that signified the category.

Axial coding. Axial coding was used in the final stages of data collection. The purpose of this coding was to identify specific circumstances and conditions in which these codes emerged (Saldaña, 2016). This coding analysis sought to find the properties and significance in which these categories occurred (Saldaña, 2016). From this final process of coding, theories were derived based on all data analyses, linking the categories to the theory generated (Saldaña, 2016).

Data Analyses

Due to this research being a grounded theory study, initial analyses were made

that drove the final stages of the study. The theory development is organized by initial experience analyses, which included stage one of the data collection process, leading to the final data analyses at the end of the study, consisting of data collected from stages two and three of the research. In addition, the research questions that were addressed are included with each theory to identify the connection between the theory derived and the research questions posed.

Theory One

Investment was built through autonomy to choose their own learning topic and method of learning; thus, teachers felt empowered through these teacher-led professional experiences. The research question addressed by this theory was, “How do teacher-led professional experiences impact teacher efficacy?”

Initial Analyses

During the initial research, teachers expressed the benefits of this professional learning experience that resulted in feelings of empowerment. Autonomy to choose what they wanted to learn and how they wanted to tackle learning about this topic led to teachers investing in these teacher-led professional experiences. Codes reoccurred in the initial analyses that resulted in consistent responses which revealed the power of choice and investment in the learning topic pursued. Donna explained the perceived benefits of the ways she approached this learning topic by responding to the interview question of “what’s beneficial about the way you are learning about this topic?” She responded,

Very self-paced, very specific for what I want to do. I feel like I’ve really been able to focus on what I want to focus on and not have to worry about is it something that other people need or other teachers’ perspectives.

Donna’s response signified participant perceptions of how this experience initially

enabled her to focus on her learning without being concerned about group consensus.

She used the precise language of “self-paced” and “focus.” These words and synonyms of these words were used throughout the initial interviews, which showed that teachers felt this experience brought direction and purpose to their professional learning.

Nancy’s response to the same interview question also provided validation of this theory of empowerment through choice and investment. She replied,

Well, I guess more than anything, it’s something we’re of interest in, so we have buy into it. Anytime you buy into it, it is something that you know you will use, and will be of interest to you. And it will help you when you’re in your curriculum, in your job altogether, and that makes all the difference.

This quote identified the concept of investment, showing that Nancy felt empowered when she was able to grow professionally in a learning topic that she found valuable. She initially identified that these experiences would benefit her in all aspects of her career.

During the interview conversation with Frank, he acknowledged the importance of choice when teachers participate in professional learning. He stated,

That’s one of the good things about this because there’s freedom. You know I think too often in education we know that kids learn differently. But, we look at teachers, and we’re like oh they all learn the same, so, let’s go to this professional development and sit in a room, and all learn for three hours. We just don’t all learn the same way.

Frank’s statement recognized that adults have varied learning styles and need opportunity to differentiate their methods to maximize their own learning. Further, he used the term “freedom” to indicate how this learning experience brought about choice and autonomy

for participants to learn, thus empowering them to grow.

These teacher-led learning experiences initiated teachers to set goals early on in the experience's progression and have their own direction for learning. Empowerment was, in turn, established through this initial process of learning with others and setting goals the teachers chose as meaningful. Lucy recapped her initial experience of this professional learning by answering this interview question: "Tell me how you feel about leading your professional learning with your group." She responded,

It was nice to be able to self-guide, especially with our small group of five. I feel like we are very like-minded, and even though we picked different standards to set our goals, we immediately wanted them to be interwoven, which I thought was really powerful. So, just being able to choose, and have a direction to start off the year was empowering.

Lucy's learning group chose to work together as one unit throughout this professional learning experience. Her response acknowledged the theory of empowerment through choice. She identified that while they all had different learning goals, the group found significance in being able to initially set their own learning direction, then collaborate to maximize their learning.

Initial experiences cumulated this theme of empowerment through choice and investment within this phenomenon of teacher-led professional experiences. This process initially encouraged teachers to be engaged in the learning initiatives at hand because they had autonomy to choose their topic. In return, the autonomous actions of choosing their own learning direction brought about feelings of investment in the overall process of teacher-led professional experiences.

Final Analyses

Throughout the final data analysis, empowerment built through autonomy was signified in multiple participant responses. Susan identified how this experience maintained her enthusiasm because of the autonomy she was given throughout the professional learning experience. She stated,

I also think that just giving us our own autonomy makes us more excited for the professional learning day. It makes us more enthusiastic. There is no negativity coming in about maybe having a prescheduled set up, or things that we're going to do that's really not going to be beneficial within our classroom.

Susan summarized her thoughts about this experience by identifying the importance of choice when building investment in a professional learning initiative. She felt this experience was impactful because her confidence was built through the autonomous structure of the learning time. Additionally, enthusiasm was present to acquire new knowledge because of the choice she had in her own learning initiative.

Lucy reiterated this feeling of empowerment through choice when asked, “what is the most significant factor of this experience that impacted your confidence in the profession?” She responded,

I think just the freedom to choose is really empowering I feel like a lot, especially in field of education, people are constantly mandating how classrooms should look and what they would like to see out of it. So, getting to pick how I want to encourage my students has been probably the best part about it.

Lucy found the opportunity to choose her learning goal, and how she wanted to improve her own classroom was significant to her professional growth. This quote established that the process of allowing the participants to decide their own learning paths was, in

turn, meaningful for students, as Lucy felt empowered to take this new learning back to her classroom.

These professional experiences allowed participants to be invested in the learning topic, which increased their confidence in the teaching profession and enabled them to grow as professionals. Callie was asked “do you find these professional days have value for you as teacher?” Her response was,

I think so. It's definitely helped me, like when people do passion projects for their kids, I felt like it was a little bit like that. You know you choose something that you're really interested in, and you research, then develop a plan. So, I think it is definitely meaningful on these days, and I feel like I'm getting a lot out of it.

Callie compared this experience to a “passion project.” She described her experience as having the opportunity to learn about an instructional initiative of interest, then having time to build a plan to implement the new initiative. Because of her interest in the initiative, she felt empowered to continue to research and acquire the new knowledge; thus, she found the experience meaningful for her professional growth.

Marty found this experience to be valuable because he was invested in the goal he established himself. He stated,

I think that you just trusted us to pick our goal and go develop with it, and having the outline just helped. Day one was most important, when I just laid it all out. I didn't even have to try that hard to follow it because it was just what I wanted to do.

Marty felt empowered because this experience allowed him to choose his own goal and decide upon avenues to accomplish it. His efficacy was increased because of the trust that was established through the element of autonomy in this professional learning model.

Due to Marty's feelings of significance for this learning goal, he had investment in creating an effective plan to accomplish the goal; therefore, he was motivated to continue learning about the topic.

As the data showed, these teacher-led learning experiences were essential in establishing investment in professional learning. Autonomy to choose your learning goal was critical in empowering teachers to follow through with the learning initiatives. This, in turn, increased teacher efficacy in the profession.

Theory Two

Through these teacher-led professional experiences, reflection took place which empowered teachers to focus on their learning needs. This ongoing reflection established teacher readiness to engage in adult learning tasks and strengthen their craft. The research questions addressed by this theory were, "How do teacher-led professional experiences impact teacher efficacy?" and "In teacher-led professional experiences, how do teachers choose to learn, and how does that impact the way we approach adult learning?"

Initial Analyses

The initial structure created through these teacher-led professional experiences encouraged teachers to reflect on their craft and develop awareness of their own needs as learners. As teachers reflected on these needs, they became adept to what they needed as adult learners to grow professionally.

During the collaboration time on the second professional learning day, Alice discussed how this experience encouraged her to reflect on her own teaching craft and identify her strengths and weaknesses. When asked, "what is your end goal for this learning initiative," Alice responded,

I feel like this conference kept challenging us to look at ourselves first. We have to recognize our strengths and weaknesses first. I feel like I need to set that stage, and I hope to overcome my fear of discussing difficult topics with my students. That is one of my personal goals.

Upon reflection, Alice's goal of overcoming her fear of discussing difficult topics with her students became a part of her learning topic, which was integrating global awareness in her lessons. Through this experience, Alice not only learned how to include global issues to improve her reading instruction, but she was also able to reflect about herself as a professional and identify a barrier she needed to overcome to reach her instructional goal. Alice's identification of her personal goal built awareness of her own needs as a professional, which readied her to engage in learning about her chosen topic.

Donna described this experience as a time to reflect about her learning needs and, as Alice also stated, an opportunity to reflect upon her own professional strengths and weaknesses. Donna provided the following response when asked to describe this professional experience in her words: "Very self-reflective. I think I was able to really understand my own background as a teacher, and figure out my strengths and weaknesses, really focus where I needed to work." This statement supported how these professional learning experiences propelled teachers to reflect and establish avenues to engage in learning that supported their individual needs.

Furthermore, Callie explained her view of leading this professional learning with her partner through the following statement:

I was actually kind of excited to be able to decide what I want to work on instead of the county or other measures deciding this is what we're all going to work on. I feel sometimes in the past where it is like oh, differentiation, and I have

had so much professional development on differentiation, I find it is something I do pretty well. So, it was nice for us to work on this topic together, it is like a small study group.

This statement identified Callie's appreciation of having the opportunity to reflect and decide what she needed to work on, rather than it being defined for her. This process of leading her own professional learning enabled Callie to focus on her learning needs, which readied her to engage in the learning. Callie found it beneficial to work with others on this learning endeavor, as she felt it was valuable to her own professional needs. Because Callie found her chosen learning topic significant for her own development as a teacher, she was invested in acquiring this new knowledge.

Teacher initial experiences in this process encouraged teachers to self-reflect. This self-reflection established teacher readiness to learn, as they found this learning significant to their own professional needs. Providing teachers opportunities to individualize learning based on their identified needs enabled them to successfully engage in the new learning endeavors.

Final Analyses

As these teacher-led professional experiences continued, participants were engaged in reflection throughout this process of learning and continued to be engaged in the learning tasks. Participants felt encouraged to reflect on their own teaching craft. This continual reflection made teachers aware of their own learning needs throughout the professional experiences. In turn, this process readied teachers for the learning tasks ahead and ultimately strengthened their craft.

Eve described how this experience provoked her to reflect and ultimately modify her teaching practices for the better. She stated,

It forced me and my partner to dig a little deeper, and really talk about how we could incorporate this, instead of just doing what we already have been doing.

Since it's my second year I would have been like oh well, I did it like this last year but, this kind of forced me to stop for a second and think if there were other options.

Eve's statement identified how this process required her to reflect about her current practices and find ways in which her present methods could be improved. This reflection that took place during these teacher-led professional experiences engaged her to grow professionally and, in return, built her teaching craft.

When Hannah was asked why she chose to learn about the concept in the capacity that she did, she stated, "I felt it was something that I really needed to work on. I felt like it was also a very key part to what the students needed, so I want to be better versed in that area." Hannah's statement demonstrated how she reflected about what her student needs were when choosing her learning topic. Hannah was compelled to grow in the area of problem-solving because when she reflected upon her teaching practices, she found it would be a beneficial focus of professional learning for her students and herself. This reflection took place during the learning experiences and readied Hannah to engage in the learning that took place.

Marty found this professional learning experience to be meaningful for his professional growth because of the opportunity presented to reflect and define a learning goal. When asked how these teacher-led experiences helped him implement the new teaching strategies in his classroom, he responded,

I think it just gave time to reflect on and come up with some ideas. I mean really it laid the foundation. The first day planted the seed for thinking about how can I

make instruction relevant, and how I can incorporate more technology in my classroom. It was just building on those, so I always kept that in mind.

Marty's response established how reflection played a critical role in the development of the learning goals in this professional learning process. Marty's statement of how this initial experience "laid the foundation" for the continual learning of his goal signified that reflection was essential for following through with the learning initiative. When implementing the goal, Marty continually reflected throughout the remainder of the experience as he stated, "I always kept those in mind," referring to the goals he set initially. Subsequently, as Marty continued to learn, he found this reflection time to be an important part of his professional learning.

Throughout this study, teachers found that reflection was a significant part of their learning process. This reflection created opportunities for meaningful goals to be set and ultimately their teaching craft to be improved. The data signified that motivation was present when teachers reflected upon their teaching and established their own readiness to engage in learning tasks. Teachers, in return, found the learning tasks to be beneficial for their professional growth and were engaged in the learning.

Theory Three

The teacher-led professional experiences encouraged teachers to set goals to explore new teaching concepts. This continuing experience, in turn, motivated teachers to implement this newly acquired knowledge. The research question addressed by this theory was, "How do teacher-led professional experiences impact teacher efficacy?"

Initial Analyses

During the first series of these professional learning days, teachers set initial goals and demonstrated implementation of newly acquired strategies early on in this learning

initiative. In the following statement, Marty explained how he began integrating an instructional tool he explored on the first professional learning day. Marty stated, “One of the things we explored was Brain Genie. So, I knew about that, and I researched it more for about a week, then I was like ok, this is amazing so I started integrating that.” Marty felt motivated to continue exploring this instructional tool and integrating it into his classroom instruction after the initial professional day, as he found the tool beneficial to his professional needs.

When the question of “what has been successful so far in this initial experience” was asked, Alice responded by discussing her initiative to begin to implementing newly acquired knowledge in her next unit of learning. She stated,

I’ve started using some of the things I’ve learned already. For this next unit, I started with a sort, which is a discussion protocol I learned. The kids sorted terrible things that happen in the classroom from bad to worse. We sorted things we have control over, and then we moved into a character discussion from our novel. So, I’ve already started incorporating some things.

This strategy she encountered and utilized in her classroom was from a conference she chose to attend as a part of her learning initiative. During subsequent professional days, Alice continued to collaborate with her partner and felt compelled to try this new instructional skill. Alice’s account of the strategy she learned from her chosen method of learning signified the degree of implementation that took place in the initial stage of this learning process.

Hannah, while collaborating with her partner on the second professional learning day, demonstrated goal setting and reflection of the initial implementation progress. Hannah made this statement when asked about the goals she and her partner had set:

“Our main goal was to use the list of questions we came up with, and see how it went. Then come back together, and see if we need to change anything.” Hannah and her partner established a goal on the first professional day to utilize the questions they had created with their students and, upon reflection, adjust the strategy to improve its effectiveness. Later in the conversation, Rhonda, Hannah’s learning partner, further explained the progress of implementation and revision. She stated,

The strategy was overwhelming. They needed something more concrete, that process was very abstract to understand the problem. So, I tried having them write out the question, but then realized where’s the connection from the skill to the problem. So, with this new graphic organizer that will come together.

The statements from this group’s dialogue illustrated teacher initial motivation to implement their newly learned knowledge and then revisit the implemented strategies to make necessary improvements to reach their goal. The teacher-led collaboration and reflection present during these initial professional learning days identified teacher aspirations to grow professionally in their chosen learning topics. Teachers were engaged in their own learning and were motivated to implement the new knowledge. This motivation to implement new skills positively contributed to teacher efficacy.

Final Analyses

As this professional learning process continued, teachers maintained their goal, and accomplished the initiatives set forth at the beginning of the series of learning experiences. Participants were encouraged by this learning process to implement newly acquired knowledge in their classrooms and seek further knowledge outside of the designated learning time.

Donna described her degree of accomplishment of the goal she set. She stated,

“I’ve accomplished it pretty well, in fact, I used Flip Grid today. So, I achieved what I set out to do. The next time, I use it, it will be even smoother.” Donna’s description of the goal achievement identified that she implemented the initiative she set forth during the first professional experience and had further plans to utilize the strategy again.

Hannah discussed that she routinely utilized the knowledge she acquired during the professional experiences through this statement: “I feel like I implement it each day. I’ve done a much better job of making sure that the students understand the why.”

Hannah initially set the goal of increasing her knowledge of how to integrate critical thinking skills in her instruction. She persevered with this goal; and at the end of the learning experiences, she felt that she had successfully integrated this new knowledge in her classroom.

When Nancy was asked to what degree did she feel she achieved her goal, she responded, “Basically 100 percent, and I am proud of that. It was a big stretch for me.” Nancy’s statement identified the improved confidence Nancy had because she learned a new technological skill that she may not have otherwise tried to learn. Nancy further discussed that she engaged in learning about this topic outside of the designated learning days. She stated,

Oh, absolutely, like at night when you're watching a ballgame or something like that, I'll pull it up and say I might try to this or this, you know different things. It's kind of exciting. It's not dull, it's something that's going to be very advantageous for me.

Nancy’s statement identified that she felt compelled to continue learning about this initiative during her personal time because it was something she felt would benefit her, thus she was engaged to continue her learning.

Frank also felt encouraged to explore his learning topic outside of the designated learning time. He stated, “This learning process has encouraged me to go out and look for other things about assessments after the actual day.” Frank wanted to seek further knowledge about his learning goal and sought out this knowledge on his own.

Lucy found this learning initiative to be advantageous to her professional growth and described how she has applied this new knowledge. She stated,

Oh, my goodness, I'm not sure I could fully explain how much I've used it in my class. I think that just individual skills I've found through this research, and the research that I was allowed to do has led me to so much more research. I'm actually surprised at how much of a snowball it's been and I know that I've come to you a couple times, telling you I've found this because of this. I've been able to use it in my classroom. I find myself seeking activities that I can implement those strategies more because I know that they'll be more effective.

Lucy's statement cumulated how this series of professional learning experiences encouraged her to seek further knowledge about this topic and utilize the strategies she found because she felt they were more effective in her classroom. Lucy felt these professional learning experiences propelled her to grow professionally beyond her initial intentions and brought positive changes to her teaching.

The data showed that goal setting was an essential part of these teacher-led professional experiences. Throughout the professional learning process, teachers were motivated to accomplish their goals, which encouraged implementation of the newly acquired knowledge. The final data analyses showed that the participants sustained momentum to accomplish their goals set from the initial professional experience and continued to build knowledge pertaining to their goals throughout the learning

experiences. Teacher efficacy was improved because of this goal sustainment.

Implementation of the new knowledge in their teaching practices provided evidence that teachers felt this knowledge had benefits for their professional growth.

Theory Four

The methods of learning in this study were traditional professional development methods; thus, teachers find these established methods are meaningful for their professional learning needs. The additional theories identified in this study show that the practices that are embedded in these teacher-led professional experiences lead to further professional growth. The research question addressed by this theory was, “In teacher-led professional experiences, how do teachers choose to learn, and how does that impact the way we approach adult learning?”

Initial Analyses

Table 4 identifies the methods the participants chose to utilize during the professional learning experiences.

Table 4

Summary of Learning Methods

Pseudo Name: Code	Chosen Topic	Method Chosen for Learning
Anne: 142, 143	Developing and testing innovative ideas.	Explored resources on the internet. Purchased M Curriculum software per request from first learning day. Anne and partner explored this software program. Also, collaborated through dialogue.
Callie: 129, 131, 135	Bringing global perspectives into the classroom and making them relevant to students.	Explored resources online, attended Worldview conference, and expressed plans of attending monthly global educator county meetings
Eve: 24, 25	Integration of other subjects into science	Researched resources via online
Frank: 90, 91	Formative assessment	Chose to read book independently
Hannah: 119, 120	Problem-solving strategies	Explored resources via online
Jay: 51, 52	Integration of technology and differentiation strategies	Group pursued two workshop and chose books to read. Jay did not attend the workshops.
Lucy: 105, 107	Critical thinking skills	Explore resources online, two teachers in group attended differentiation workshop, and four books were ordered upon group's request to read. Lucy read one of the books, was inspired, and requested the companion book to read.
Marty: 70, 71, 72	21st century technological tools	Exploring resources on internet including pedagogical and interactive sites for students to use. Also, met with high school teachers to understand potential relevance of 21st century skills in their career technical courses on second learning day.
Nancy: 9, 10, 12, 13	Integration of Google Classroom technological tools into classroom.	Reflected and made outline for learning, then asked for a colleague to come and teach them. Colleague came and taught second professional learning day. Nancy and partner developed their own questions to be answered about Google Classroom prior to that day.

As Table 4 shows, the methods teachers used to engage in their chosen learning

topics were methods such as attending conferences or workshops, exploration of online resources, and book studies. While teachers initially chose to use these traditional methods, accompanying theories show that these teacher-led professional experiences compelled teachers to engage in processes that further supported their learning needs, in conjunction with the chosen methods. The processes of learning that teachers engaged in, along with the specific elements of teacher-led professional experiences, initially impacted teacher learning needs, as shown in the overall data analyses.

Final Analyses

Upon final data collection, no participant varied or changed their learning method that was established during the initial professional learning experience. All teachers maintained the same method throughout these experiences, thus teachers found these methods were meaningful for their learning.

Theory Five

These teacher-led professional experiences established opportunities for collegial relationships to strengthen and meaningful collaboration to take place. The research question addressed by this theory was, “In teacher-led professional experiences, how do teachers choose to learn, and how does that impact the way we approach adult learning?”

Initial Analyses

Throughout these initial experiences, teachers expressed that collaborative opportunities contributed to their learning needs. Throughout the initial data collection, teachers discussed how these professional learning experiences supported collegial relationships. Jay found this collaborative time valuable; he made the following statement when asked how this experience motivated him:

I really like the way we did it this time, all sitting there together. Because then

we're talking about differentiation, and looking up what we're going to do.

We're talking about things like how did you do differentiation in your class, it helps to bounce ideas off each other.

Jay expressed how he found it meaningful to meet with his colleagues and collaborate about topics that pertained to their teaching craft. Jay felt that this experience provided time for him to listen to others' ideas and potentially assimilate this new knowledge for his own classroom. This statement was representative of participant feelings of how this learning process provided opportunities for them to discuss their professional needs and collaborate to find solutions to these needs.

Lucy identified how these teacher-led professional experiences were instrumental for implementation of new strategies that were uncovered while collaborating. When asked, "what are your plans for using the professional learning," Lucy stated,

I think that it will just generate this really cohesive professional learning community, like today my partner is going to this differentiation workshop, and she will come back and share. Then, I will read this text, and they can take things that are going to be important to all of us. I feel like almost we're getting more information that way because it's not just me going to one professional development, and not communicating with everybody else.

Lucy's response showed that teachers felt this professional learning experience initially encouraged collaboration as teachers had opportunities to share their learning with others in a collegial setting. This collaboration enabled participants to learn from each other and gain information that contributed to their professional learning needs.

In addition to participants collaborating to learn new strategies, teachers also found this experience grew their existing collegial relationships. Nancy echoed this

strengthening of collegial relationships by explaining what she found particularly rewarding about this experience early in the professional learning experience. She stated, “Yes, it’s been good working with my partner, as he is my new co-teacher. That way we kind of work together, and that brings us closer, and we can see the success together. So, I think that’s very rewarding.” Initially, Nancy found these professional learning experiences created opportunities for effective collaboration to take place with her colleague. Throughout the initial data, emphasis was placed on the value of collegial relationships when expressing the benefits of these professional learning experiences.

Final Analyses

Collaborative practices were sustained throughout these teacher-led professional experiences. The data concluded that participants felt collaboration played a definitive role in their professional growth throughout these experiences. When Donna was asked, “how did this process of the professional learning days engage you to grow professionally,” she responded,

Well, being able to work with other people, and utilize the time that was given to us to bounce ideas off of each other, that was crucial because you know we don't often get that opportunity especially across grade levels. So, it was good to work with people, and have those people in other grade levels to bounce ideas off of.

Donna’s response identified that this process of professional learning enabled her to collaborate with individuals with whom she typically does not have the opportunity to work. She found this collaboration to be valuable to her development as a teacher.

Karla also found having this cross-grade level collaborative time as meaningful to her professional learning. When discussing what parts of this experience she found most helpful, she stated,

I also just liked working with other teachers that are the same department as me but I normally don't work with, like I planned a lot with seventh grade during these days. We were researching this topic, and because I don't normally see them so, we were able to share our different ideas from workshops we had attended before.

Karla described how she made an effort to collaborate with teachers from a different grade level, as she found that the ideas she gained from others during this time as beneficial to her learning. These teacher-led professional experiences created time for collaborative practices to occur. Karla's description acknowledged that when teachers had autonomy to establish groups based on professional needs, meaningful collaboration took place.

Callie identified through the following statement how she established a collegial relationship with a colleague during these teacher-led professional experiences. She stated,

We took initiative when we would come across something that was like oh I saw this really cool thing about storytelling, and I'd send it to her. You know, and she would see something really cool about social justice and bringing that into the classroom, and she would send it to me. So, we kind of kept an eye out for our focuses for each other even though what we were focusing on was a little bit different. We were able to keep each other in mind. And you know I sent her a couple things at times, and said this looks awesome.

Callie explained that throughout these professional experiences, she continued to share with her colleague even though they had chosen different paths for their learning goal. This reciprocal sharing signified the ongoing collaboration that was present throughout

these professional learning experiences.

Nancy provided the following response when asked how this experience engaged her to grow professionally:

Well, the collaboration was a big part in it because at the very beginning when we had PLCs all during the year where we were able to discuss, and say well what can you do to make this better. So, then I would have to get research that. And that just made me held a little bit more accountable.

Nancy felt collaboration was a significant component of this process for her growth as a professional. The ongoing collaboration provided opportunities to revisit the initiative and continue to learn together. She concluded that these ongoing meetings with her colleagues helped to maintain her accountability as a participant and propelled her to achieve her learning goal.

Previous and subsequent data supported the theory of strong collegial relationships in these teacher-led professional experiences. The presence of collaborative practices continued to occur throughout the data collection. The data reflected that collaboration was a critical component of adult learning and that these teacher-led professional experiences provided opportunities for these practices to take place. Teachers maintained collegial relationships throughout this process of professional learning and continually referred to this collaboration as meaningful.

Additional Findings

As data cumulated throughout this study, an additional finding was found through the data analyses. This finding, identified as theory six, contributes to the category of teacher development. Data occurred continuously in the analyses that identified this finding as significant. While this theory does not address any of the research questions

proposed in this study, there were compelling data that supported this theory, which contributed to the development of teachers in the profession.

Theory Six

These teacher-led professional experiences provided designated, embedded time for teachers to explore learning needs and engage in professional learning. Teachers found this time valuable for their professional needs.

Initial Analyses

Early in this learning experience, Marty explained how this embedded time to explore new resources was meaningful for his professional learning. He stated,

As teachers, just time management is so hard. Do I check out this website, or do I grade these papers? So, you know, I grade the papers. It's nice to have time to really explore the internet for new resources, and real world applications. Yeah, it was good.

Marty's statement identified the value found in the designated time provided in these professional learning experiences, which was established during the workday for these teachers. His explanation indicated how this time contributed to further exploration of resources to improve his classroom instruction.

During the initial professional experience, Lucy provided her perception of how this professional learning model would be cumulating for her as an educator at the end of the learning experience. When asked, "have you and your partner set any goals during the experience for where you want to be at a certain point with the critical thinking goal," Lucy stated, "It's nice that this is broken up into three chunks because you can learn and then implement. Then I feel like towards the end of the year we're going to be able to synthesize what our experiences were."

Lucy's insight signified how the embedded time of this experience would aid in synthesis of the new knowledge she was acquiring. Participants in this study initially described how the time provided by this model would be instrumental in implementing newly found strategies.

Final Analyses

As data continued to be collected throughout this research, it was found that established time to engage in professional learning was a key contribution to teacher development. Having the embedded time to work on their learning goal was found to be critical for sustainment of the learning initiative. In the following statement, Callie described the most significant factor of this experience that impacted her confidence in the profession:

Just having time to really sit down and think about this. You know having that time during the professional days to really research into the topic because sometimes that's the biggest factor, you would want to do this project but there just isn't time to sit down and do it. So, having that carved out for us several times throughout the year was really beneficial to sticking with it.

Callie felt that these professional experiences provided the necessary time to engage in learning throughout the year and work toward her established objective. Her insights showed that she was motivated to learn, and having the embedded time set aside to do so was critical to her professional growth. She concluded that this allotted time enabled her to focus on the learning that needed to take place to maintain her goal.

Susan found that this embedded time provided through these professional learning experiences was helpful in improving her teaching:

I'll just say having the freedom and the time, it was extremely helpful. The

freedom to just explore any topic that our department thought was meaningful, and then obviously just that free time in order to do so, having that structure of being able to explore in the way that we found best, that time to go to the library, or search on the computer, or talk to our colleagues. It just let us behave as the professionals that we are. I think this was really helpful.

Susan described that the structure of embedded time established through these experiences acknowledged she and her colleagues as professionals, which she found important. In addition, Susan identified that the time made available was not mandated to be utilized in a specific way, rather teachers had the opportunity to use the time as they found most beneficial for their professional needs.

Frank recognized the benefit of having designated time that is utilized for professional growth. He stated that this process engaged him professionally in the following way:

It makes you take the time. Like anybody, your first inclination is oh I've got so much to get done on my planning time. But it's amazing what you can get out of just two hours of self-reflection as far as what you do on a daily basis.

This statement identified that time to reflect was a critical component of teacher development in this study. Frank felt that while it was difficult to set aside time to reflect and learn, once he did so, it was beneficial. Frank acknowledged that these teacher-led professional experiences compelled him to take the time, and that this time was important for his professional learning.

The data collected in this study established embedded time as an important contribution to teacher development. Designated time to engage in research, collaboration, and other identified avenues of learning was an essential component for

teachers to successfully implement their learning initiatives.

Summary

The data collected through this study showed how teacher-led professional experiences impact teacher efficacy and identify essential tenets of adult learning that contribute to teacher professional growth. In addition, this study also established the methods teachers find meaningful to engage in professional learning, when given the autonomy to choose those methods.

The data derived from this grounded theory study founded six theories. These resulting theories provided evidence that impacted teacher efficacy. This evidence included goal setting, empowerment through autonomy, and focused needs. In addition, the theories established also delivered insight of valuable tenets of adult learning to include collaboration and reflective practices. Last, an additional theory emerged from the data as a contribution to teacher development. This theory was the importance of designated, embedded time when engaging in professional learning, which contributed to future implementation of acquired knowledge.

The theories derived were established from the continual coding of data that was conducted throughout the study. While important quotes from the data are identified in the data analyses, all codes and quotes assigned to each theory are found in Appendix E. The codes, organized by theory in these tables, show the reoccurrence and saturation of the codes in the data collection. As the grounded theory method ascertains, the reoccurrence and capacity of codes is a critical component in determining established theories (Hansen, 2005; Ruona, 2005; Saldaña, 2016); therefore, all codes identified from this data analyses are included in Appendix E to exemplify the significance of the theories derived.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Introduction

The avenues of acquiring new strategies which later result in sustained improvement of teaching practices has been a critical area of research in education. Researchers continue to study effective elements of professional development to improve teaching and learning. This study aimed to provide further insight of successful professional learning by researching the phenomenon of teacher-led professional experiences. The impact these experiences had on efficacy and adult learning tenets were examined throughout this grounded theory study.

Through this research, qualitative data surfaced six theories that contribute to effective professional learning. These data bring conclusive theories that can be applied to future principles of professional learning. Theories developed through this ethnographic study contribute to research of efficacy, adult learning, and teacher development. Through these data-driven theories, successful avenues in which teachers transfer newly acquired knowledge to classroom practice were revealed. The theories found in this study support previous literature about efficacy and adult learning. Also, this research of teacher-led professional experiences surfaced recommendations for teacher practices, school leaders, and teacher education programs. These recommendations will propel 21st century adult learning forward as leaders of learning continue to grow as professionals.

Connections to the Literature

Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 contributes to the theories developed in this study of teacher-led professional experiences and their impact on efficacy. The theories found connect to scholarly reviewed literature and reiterate significant findings of previous research. Table 5 summarizes the major findings of this study and their connections to scholarly literature previously reviewed.

Table 5

Theories and Connections to Literature

Bolado's Theories	Connections to Literature
1. Investment was built through autonomy to choose their own learning topic, and method of learning. Thus, teachers felt empowered through these teacher-led professional experiences.	Balls et al., 2016 Bandura, 1997 Knowles et al., 2015 Zimmerman, 1995
2. Through these teacher-led professional experiences, reflection took place, which empowered teachers to focus on their learning needs. This ongoing reflection established teacher readiness to engage in adult learning tasks and strengthen their craft.	Bandura, 1997 Drago-Severson, 2009 Knowles et al., 2015
3. The teacher-led professional experiences encouraged teachers to set goals to explore new teaching concepts. This continuing experience, in turn, motivated teachers to implement this newly acquired knowledge.	Bandura, 1997
4. The methods of learning in this study were traditional professional development methods. Thus, teachers find these established methods are meaningful for their professional learning needs. The additional theories identified in this study show that the practices that are embedded in these teacher-led professional experiences lead to further professional growth.	Darling-Hammond, 2000 Easton, 2008a Guskey & Yoon, 2009
5. These teacher-led professional experiences established opportunities for collegial relationships to strengthen, and meaningful collaboration to take place.	Desimone, 2009 Drago-Severson, 2009 Fullan, 2014 Hirsch, 2015 Leana, 2011
6. These teacher-led professional experiences provided designated, embedded time for teachers to explore learning needs and engage in professional learning. Teachers found this time valuable for their professional needs.	Ball and Cohen, 1999 Darling-Hammond, 2000 Guskey & Yoon, 2009

Theory One: Connections to Literature

Theory one demonstrates how investment was built through autonomy where teachers were able to develop their own professional learning goals and method of learning. Zimmerman (1995) discussed that individual control over their own environment builds empowerment as the individual feels they have influence over their own future. Empowering processes where individuals are able to make decisions that pertain to their own lives leads to engagement in activities that are meaningful to them (Balls et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 1995). In the initial and final stages of this study of teacher-led professional experiences, teachers found the process of choosing their own learning topic and methods of learning empowering for their professional growth. Literature of Zimmerman (1995) and Balls et al. (2016) supported these findings as teachers made their own decisions pertaining to their professional learning in this study, which, in turn, created opportunities of empowerment.

Teachers were engaged to learn about these topics as they felt invested in the learning initiatives. Bandura (1997) summarized that personal investment in the knowledge sought is connected to individual expectations for achievement, thus the person is motivated to achieve the goal set. This perceived control, in turn, contributes to one's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 1995). Teacher efficacy was increased in this study, as teachers felt empowered to continue learning due to autonomy given to choose their own learning avenues.

Throughout this professional learning model, teachers were empowered to continue to learn because they felt the new knowledge was beneficial to their own needs. Knowles et al. (2015) concluded that as adult learners find value in the new knowledge, they are self-initiated and take responsibility for their own learning. In this study, this

assumption of adult learning was evident. Teachers were motivated to be self-directed learners throughout the learning experiences, as they found the learning had value for their professional growth.

Theory Two: Connections to Literature

Theory two of this study established that reflection took place during these teacher-led professional experiences, which empowered teachers to focus on their own needs and readied them for the new learning tasks. According to Knowles et al. (2015), adult learners need to feel an investment in the new learning in order to establish readiness to learn. Knowles et al.'s assumption is evident in this study, as teachers reflected about their own learning needs to create a goal in which they felt invested. This investment in the learning task created relevance for the adult learners of this study, and teachers were willing to acquire the new knowledge.

Drago-Severson (2009) explained the adult learning pillar of teaming, which initiates the practice of reflection when colleagues discuss and examine their own practices. In this study, the designated time set aside for teaming to take place facilitated reflection throughout the stages of professional learning. Participants of these teacher-led professional experiences utilized this time to collaborate, reflect, and potentially revise existing assumptions they had about their own teaching (Drago-Severson, 2009). Bandura (1997) discussed intrinsic motivation and how this type of motivation stems from self-interest in acquiring new knowledge. To establish self-interest, reflection should first take place to validate the learner's need to know (Knowles et al., 2015). Once this self-interest is established, individual perceived self-efficacy increases, as they feel that the new skills have benefits for them (Bandura, 1997). When teachers participated in these teacher-led experiences, the data confirmed that teacher efficacy

improved throughout the professional learning model when they reflected and established their own needs for learning. This reflection empowered teachers to focus on their chosen need; and in turn, they found intrinsic fulfillment in pursuing their goal.

Theory Three: Connections to Literature

Theory three established that these teacher-led experiences encouraged teachers to set goals in order to explore new teaching concepts, which motivated teachers to implement the knowledge learned. According to Bandura (1997), individuals who do set goals develop a sense of self-efficacy throughout the course of working to obtain the goal. Bandura (1997) stated that it is critical to set subgoals and create timelines to ensure the goals have purpose. Participants of this study had improved self-efficacy due to the goal setting they initiated early in the teacher-led professional experiences.

According to the data collected, the goals teachers set were maintained because teachers continued to reflect on their progress throughout the embedded professional learning experiences. Bandura (1997) discussed that the act of goal setting encourages individuals to outperform previous accomplishments, as they are able to see their progress and conceptualize the outcome. Participants initiated goal setting based on their own learning needs during these teacher-led professional experiences. This learning model encouraged participants to consistently revisit these goals over the course of the 4 professional learning days. Over time, teachers realized their goals, as the data indicate that participants stated they met their goals and implemented the newly acquired knowledge.

Theory Four: Connections to Literature

The data showed that the methods participants chose to use in this study were primarily traditional professional development avenues; thus, theory four identified that

while traditional professional learning methods were used, it was the practices that were embedded with these methods that led to further professional growth. Guskey and Yoon (2009) summarized that the context in which teachers learn plays a definitive role in acquiring new learning. Professional learning situated in environments of collaboration encourages embedded learning (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Participants of this study implemented newly acquired practices in their classroom instruction over the course of this professional learning model. The autonomous environment and collaborative structures that were present in these teacher-led professional learning experiences encouraged participants to excel throughout the process.

Easton (2008a) discussed that learning activities such as book studies, lesson reflections, action research, and collaborative groups provide avenues for effective professional learning to take place. As the data reflect, these were common avenues in which participants chose to participate throughout this study. Researchers conclude that one-time professional development activities can be meaningful; but for sustainment to occur, collaboration should be embedded in the experience (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Easton, 2008a; Guskey & Yoon, 2009).

Theory 5: Connections to Literature

Collaboration was found to be an essential component of adult learning and teacher efficacy in this study of teacher-led professional experiences. Theory five established that collegial relationships and collaborative practices were strengthened through this professional learning model. Leana (2011) emphasized that social capital is a critical resource for professional support. Understanding that individuals are more confident when they have time to collaborate brings the concept of structuring schools so these collegial experiences can take place (Fullan, 2014; Hirsch, 2015; Leana, 2011).

Throughout these teacher-led professional experiences, the data reflected that collaboration was a key component of this professional learning model. Participants found the collaboration meaningful and a strategic element of their own learning.

Drago-Severson (2009) identified teaming as one of the essential pillars of adult learning. She concluded that teaming allows adults to participate in dialogue that engages them in reflection about their own practices, which allows for synthesis of new assumptions (Drago-Severson, 2009). Data for this theory found that when participants participated in collaborative practices, they were able to make connections about their teaching that otherwise would not have been realized. Desimone (2009) specified collaboration as an activity that is found in effective professional learning. The collaborative practices where teachers have an active role in facilitating their own learning surface new learning that is routinely revisited with colleagues (Desimone, 2009). Teachers routinely met with colleagues to discuss their own learning initiatives throughout these teacher-led professional experiences, and the data concluded that this reoccurring collaboration was a significant component of their learning.

Theory Six: Connections to Literature

The data analyses of this study revealed a contribution to teacher development that surfaced the importance of time when conducting professional learning. Theory six states that these teacher-led professional experiences provided designated, embedded time for teachers to explore learning needs and engage in professional learning. Researchers Ball and Cohen (1999) discussed the importance of providing time along with designated professional development activities, as they stated time to reflect on new knowledge brings along necessary connections. Guskey and Yoon (2009) reiterated this concept by summarizing that sustainability of practices requires time that is specifically

used to improve teaching practices. Throughout this study of teacher-led professional experiences, participants felt the time which was embedded in the learning model to reflect, collaborate, and synthesis new knowledge was critical to their future implementation of new practices.

This embedded time provided during the professional work day was designated for teachers to reflect and work towards defined professional learning initiatives. Designating time throughout the school year to focus specifically on teacher-defined learning goals was found to contribute to teacher participation in ongoing reflection of practices. Darling-Hammond (2000) identified time to study and reflect as components that lead to growth in professional practices when they are centered around teacher needs. Thus, in this study, time was a substantial contribution to teacher development in the profession.

Contributions of Professional Growth through Teacher-Led Learning

The study of teacher-led professional experiences identified facets of professional learning that were found to be beneficial for educators. The facets of these teacher-led experiences were found to be effective in this cyclical model where adult learning was looping and recurrent. Throughout this study, theories of professional learning were established to include elements of reflection, collaboration, goal setting, and embedded time. These components of professional learning were meaningful to educators of this study.

This professional learning model demonstrates the elements of adult learning that are vital for effective professional development. While the data of this study surfaced important components of professional learning, improvements to this model can be made to encompass cyclical professional learning where reflection and peer observing occur

routinely. The following figure illustrates the cycle in which these teacher-led professional experiences occurred in this study. Additionally, based on the data gathered, this figure includes improvements that should occur in this model to promote continual reflection and revision of practices. The practices of peer observation and revision are included in this model. These practices are italicized to indicate their addition to the study's model.

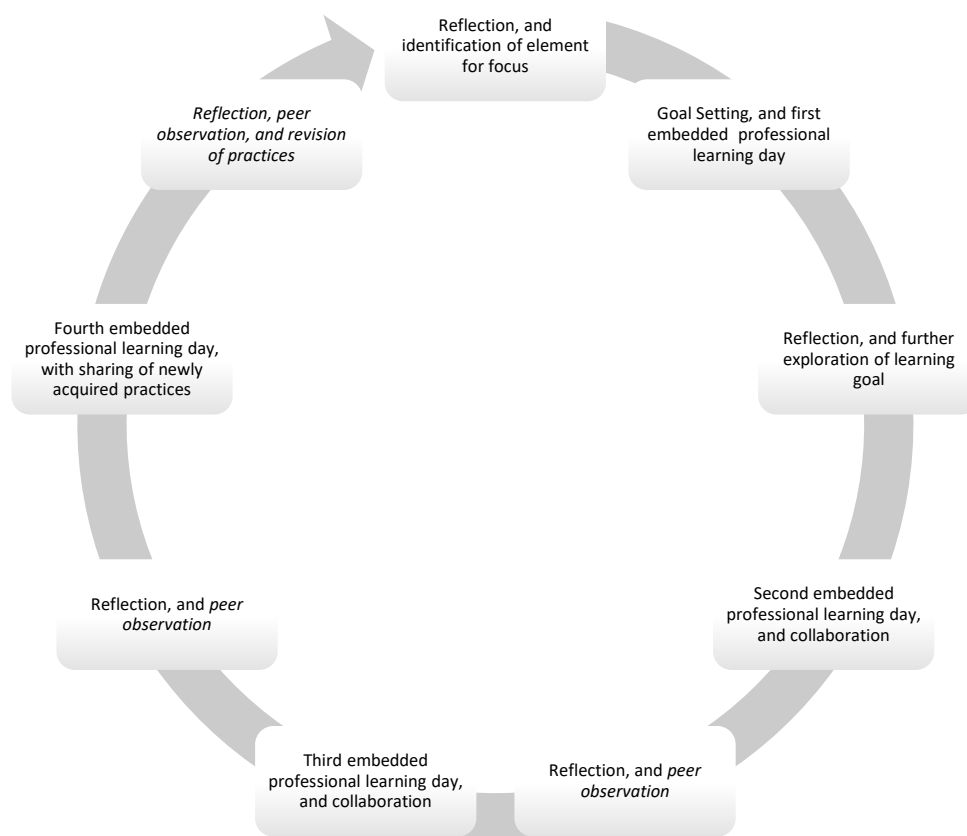


Figure. The Cyclical Model for Teacher-Led Learning Experiences.

Significance of Peer Observations and Revision of Practices

Observational learning has been a long-standing construct in learning theories and describes the processes individuals undergo to acquire new behaviors. Bandura's (1977b) social cognitive theory explains that during the attentional processes of

observing, individuals learn what they may want to implement as well as what may not work for them. This process provides definitive expectations for the observers, as they discover what is valuable to their learning from the observation based on their own perceptions (Bandura, 1997). Observational learning did not occur in this study of teacher-led professional experiences. Participants did not seek out opportunities to engage with others through peer observations at any stage of study; therefore, further studies should be conducted to develop avenues for this type of learning to occur, as research identifies it is beneficial for adult learners (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Bandura, 1999; Fullan, 2007).

According to Ball and Cohen (1999), observational learning does aid in the development of teaching, as the practice requires more of the observer than simply mimicry; rather, it is the synthesis of observation that occurs within the practice that leads to revision of classroom practices. This revision of classroom practices stems from reflection of the peer observation and the assimilation of how these observed practices can be reconstructed to work in their own classrooms (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Bandura (1999) furthered the understandings of how observations are synthesized by stating that creative modeling occurs when observers think critically about what they have observed and develop their own understandings of the observed practice. This process requires reflection of current practices as well as observation of potential practices to think systemically about their own teaching (Bandura, 1999; Fullan, 2007). Teachers potentially revise practices when they witness others taking risks and achieving success when attempting a new skill (Bandura, 1977b). This reiterates the understanding of having collaborative practices embedded in a professional learning model along with peer observations, so discussions can take place that surface these endeavors. Researchers

conclude that collaborative practices allow educators to analyze practices and discuss new ideas, which potentially encourage them to attempt a new practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Hawley & Valli, 1999).

In a case study previously discussed in Chapter 2, Thacker (2017) identified that teachers viewed the process of peer observations as an effective practice where they can learn from each other. This exploratory study, which included qualitative methods of interviews and observations to derive findings, found that when teachers participated in peer observations, both beginning and veteran teachers identified this type of professional learning as valuable (Thacker, 2017); however, time constraints and lack of protocol hindered teacher participation (Thacker, 2017). While teacher expertise is considered an important component of teacher leadership (Easton, 2008b; Fullan, 2016; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), as indicated in the study of Thacker, more opportunities are needed in districts to encourage sharing of expertise among colleagues.

With the understanding of the benefits of observational learning, investment in the task of observing is critical. Motivation should be present for the observer to benefit from a learning initiative, as intrinsic motivation is a role in one's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997); therefore, creating processes that create investment in the observational learning components of this learning model would be critical to its successful implementation.

Recommendations for Teacher Practices

As the study of teacher-led professional experiences was concluded, it was evident that participants of this study found this learning model beneficial to their development as professionals. The data concluded that efficacy elements such as motivation and goal setting were present throughout this study as well as adult learning components such as collaboration and reflection. The theories derived from this research

bring to the surface practices that should be implemented in the teaching profession. Those elements include teachers as leaders, utilizing teacher expertise, and reflective practice.

Teachers as Leaders

Throughout this study, data revealed that teachers were motivated when given autonomy to lead their own learning. They found it conducive to their professional growth to have opportunities to set their own learning goals and seek out resources to engage in learning they found meaningful. This surfaces the construct of teacher leadership and its valuable tenets that should be practiced in the teaching profession.

Teacher leadership has long been examined in the educational profession. According to Wilson (2016), in earlier years and still in some capacities, teachers were considered leaders in entirely official roles “such as department head, master teacher, or union representative” (p. 46). These roles were based on seniority and focused on maintaining productivity in schools (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The current wave of teacher leadership, which focuses on professional development and utilizing teacher expertise, identifies teachers as critical participants in decisions that affect the teaching and learning of schools (Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). York-Barr and Duke (2004) stated that this current professional model “values teacher knowledge and judgment grounded in practice, as well as equally externally generated knowledge” (p. 2). This model reiterates the understanding of the value of teacher expertise and teacher abilities to lead changes in schools that directly relate to student learning (Wilson, 2016; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

This study of teacher-led professional experiences supports the current understanding of teacher leadership, providing data that emphasize the importance of

teacher expertise, collegial relationships, and investment in initiatives. As participants of this study were eager to collaborate and lead colleagues to further their professional learning, previous studies also supported the roles of teacher leaders and identified that informal leadership roles should be acknowledged.

Wilson (2016) conducted a recent study where teachers were asked through a survey that included Likert scale questions and open-ended questions to describe their perspectives of the role of a teacher leader in PLCs. The results of this study indicated that teachers viewed leaders in three main ways: as those who are in formal roles as assigned by building administrators, as leaders who are effective in their classrooms, and in collegial capacities (Wilson, 2016). According to Wilson (2016), teachers being recognized as informal leaders is still not as widely recognized by teachers as the traditional, designated leadership roles. Wilson's study brings awareness that some teachers do identify leaders in schools in broader contexts that include collaborators and influencers of school culture (Wilson, 2016); thus, as the study of Wilson indicated along with this study of teacher-led professional experiences, teachers taking on leadership roles, whether formal or informal, is perceived by teachers as empowering.

Capitalizing on Teacher Expertise through Collaboration

Theory five identified that collaboration was an essential component of adult learning and teacher efficacy in this study of teacher-led professional experiences. It established that collegial relationships and collaborative practices were strengthened during this professional learning model. With this understanding, it is recommended that teacher expertise be utilized throughout collaborative practices of schools.

According to researchers, the process of effective professional learning should involve these aspects of teacher expertise: collaborative practices, shared decision-

making about student learning, and sharing of skills to improve teachers' craft (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Easton, 2008b; Fullan, 2016). These newly found needs in education identify the necessity of teacher expertise in making decisions about professional learning (Easton, 2008a). Fullan (2016) described the importance of investing in the professional capital of schools when moving toward change. Fullan (2016) identified the sector of "decisional (or decision-making) capital" (p. 44) as instrumental in utilizing expertise within the organization to make informed decisions about the teaching and learning of schools (Fullan, 2016). Easton (2008a) summarized that the model of district leaders and building administrators making decisions about professional learning without the enlistment of teachers as collaborators does not serve the best interests of students. Fullan (2016) elaborated on the influence of teacher expertise in schools by stating that teachers "learn best by practicing on the job, having access to coaches, and skilled peers" (p. 48). This concept brings forth the understanding that teachers leading and influencing each other through multiple modalities refines their skills, which in turn improves student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Fullan, 2016). Darling-Hammond (2006) asserted that the vast knowledge needed to further student learning cannot be obtained without the sharing of practices. Easton (2008b) stated that "powerful professional learning honors the professionalism, expertise, and skills of staff members" (p. 757). Hawley and Valli (1999) extended on this understanding by stating, "if teachers are denied input in their own professional development, they are likely to become cynical and detached from school improvement efforts" (p. 139). These understandings provide cumulating emphasis of the need for teachers to collaborate and develop their expertise (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Easton, 2008b; Fullan, 2016; Hawley & Valli, 1999).

This study of teacher-led professional experiences showed the necessity of using

teacher expertise to create situations where meaningful collaboration can occur.

Participants throughout this study found the embedded opportunities to collaborate in this learning model as beneficial to their professional needs; therefore, the data derived from this study, along with additional research from scholars, demonstrate that seeking teacher expertise within the context of collaborative practices is essential to educator learning needs.

The Significance of Reflective Practices

Cumulating data identified that reflective practices should be integral processes of teacher professional experiences. Theory two of this research of teacher-led professional experiences revealed that reflection was a critical process of this professional development model that readied teachers for learning tasks. With this understanding, reflective processes are critical elements of adult learning, and teachers should engage in these practices to develop as professionals. Brookfield (2017) defined critical reflection as “the sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the accuracy and validity of our teaching assumptions” (p. 3). All educators hold assumptions that they find valuable to the teaching and learning they facilitate; these assumptions explicitly and implicitly guide professional decisions (Brookfield, 2017). To continually improve in the profession, assumptions should be routinely revisited (Brookfield, 2017; Drago-Severson, 2009).

Knight (2014) identified the process of filming as one avenue to propel reflective practice in teaching. He described this practice as counteracting inhibitors of reflective processes (Knight, 2014). Confirmation bias is a common inhibitor of reflective practices as teachers consistently work to find support that confirms the beliefs they currently hold, which keeps them from challenging their own assumptions (Knight, 2014). The

implementation of videoing for reflection helps teachers challenge these assumptions (Knight, 2014). Knight explained that videoing requires trust and that cameras should be used for improving teaching and learning, not as evaluative methods. The process of videoing can be an independent endeavor that allows opportunity for self-reflection (Knight, 2014; Marzano, Boogren, Heflebower, Kanold-McIntyre, & Pickering, 2012). Although this practice can be independent or collective, according to Knight, the processes that take place after videoing are vital for reflection. Reflective practices such as constructive dialogue and using learning forms during the videoing process encourage teachers to change assumptions they have about their teaching (Knight, 2014). Marzano et al. (2012) identified videoing as “one powerful way for teachers to obtain focused feedback about their progress” (p. 62). Focused feedback empowers teachers to specify strategies they want to focus on and utilizes avenues such as reflection logs and student surveys to receive feedback (Marzano et al., 2012).

Theory three of this study of teacher-led professional experiences established that teachers set goals to implement newly acquired knowledge and were motivated to accomplish their goals. While this research identified the significance of goal setting, Marzano et al. (2012) also concluded that teachers who are reflective set professional goals that lead to growth in their practices. As the methodology of teacher-led professional experiences conducted self-assessments set forth by the state, Marzano et al. established that self-audits are essential for creating starting points for goal setting to take place. These self-audits allow educators to identify areas of further growth and shape autonomous choice for selecting focuses of professional learning (Marzano et al., 2012).

As investment in learning initiatives was a component that increased teacher efficacy in this study, Knight (2014) identified the balance between accountability and

autonomy when implementing reforms. According to Knight, choice is necessary for any reform to move forward, as choice accepts that there may be more than one solution to an issue. In addition, providing choice for educators also stems thinking, which pushes teachers to engage in reflection about the potential solutions they consider viable (Knight, 2014). Knight contended that it is important to understand that accountability does not mean mandating specific programs; rather, accountability means taking responsibility for engaging in the processes that commit to professional growth (Knight, 2014). Autonomy requires accountability to recognize reflection is necessary for growth, and professional learning is needed to accomplish the established goal (Knight, 2014; Marzano et al., 2012).

Brookfield (2017) established that effective reflection is a process that requires the individual to consider their own assumptions and understand themselves as individuals. The study of teacher-led professional experiences and its impact on efficacy found that participants focused on their own learning needs as the learning model propelled teachers to reflect individually. The data of this study reflected that because effective professional learning acts as a cyclical model, reflective practices should take place routinely. Reflection takes place to ensure teachers have awareness of their own learning needs, which in response encourages teachers to revise their practices (Brookfield, 2017).

Recommendations for School Leaders

This study of teacher-led professional experiences uncovered not only necessary practices for teachers but also those for school leaders. Processes that are created for professional learning in schools begin with the school leader, as school leaders create the dynamic culture that is established in schools (Fullan, 2014). With this understanding,

recommendations for school leaders are identified as they are essential for successful professional learning. Recommendations for leaders to build school cultures and support teacher leaders are set forth for facilitation of school environments that value learning.

School Leaders and Building School Culture

This study of teacher-led professional experiences surfaced the concept that teachers can effectively facilitate their own professional learning, in conjunction with a school culture that emphasizes teacher leadership. Effective change in schools occurs from school leaders investing in shared decision-making for lasting impact (Fiarman, 2017; Fullan, 2007). Fullan (2007) stated, “reform is not just putting into place the latest policy. It means changing the cultures of classrooms, schools, districts, universities, and so on” (p. 7). This statement emphasizes the essential position of teacher leaders when initiating change in schools. Fullan (2007) explained that “shared meaning” (p. 11) is necessary for change to take place and that both entities, individual and systematic, must invest in the reform. Reform changes that sustain over time require a shift in culture (Fullan, 2007). Balls et al. (2016) recognized the contributions of teacher leaders when shaping school cultures. They summarized that by creating environments that instill trust, teacher leaders encourage investment in school initiatives which, in turn, builds unity in the school’s mission (Balls et al., 2016).

The teacher-led professional experiences of this study cumulated the impact of teacher investment in shared initiatives. As theory one demonstrated, when teachers are afforded input when making decisions that pertain to their professional learning, they are invested in the initiative at hand. Fiarman (2017) reiterated that shared decision-making contributes to the building of school culture but reminds school leaders that it “requires more than merely soliciting teacher input” (p. 23). Rather, for true culture shifts to take

place, teachers should be afforded the shared responsibility to lead school initiatives, especially those involving the teaching and learning of students (Fiarman, 2017).

As teachers have been recognized as an integral part of improving school cultures, school leaders are acknowledging the importance of investment in social capital to improve school cultures (Leana, 2011). According to Leana (2011), social capital “is not a characteristic of the individual teacher but instead resides in the relationships among teachers” (p. 32). Schools that highlight the social capital they have and create opportunities for meaningful interactions to take place are more likely to have a school culture that shares common learning goals (Fullan, 2016; Leana, 2011). Leana acknowledged that while school leaders do focus on human capital within schools, it is difficult to grow every teacher individually and still reach goals. Rather, the combination of human capital and social capital in school cultures creates environments where “teachers can continually learn from their conversations with one another and become even better at what they do” (Leana, 2011, p. 33). This understanding echoes the significance of theory five of this study, which recognized participants identified value of collaboration. Teachers of this study found that collegial relationships were critical to the follow through of their learning goals.

School Leaders and their Role in Supporting Teachers

Fullan (2014) defined the role of the school administrator in leading instructional practices as the “learning leader – one who models learning, but also shapes the conditions for all to learn on a continuous basis” (p. 9). The belief that the school leader cannot be the sole contributor of all pedagogical decisions in the school is pivotal in understanding the importance of strong teacher leaders in today’s schools (Fiarman, 2017; Fullan, 2014). Fiarman (2017) acknowledged that school leaders need to build

leadership skills in teachers by providing opportunities for teachers to lead. Giving teachers autonomy to make meaningful decisions that affect overall teaching and learning is essential in building collective capacity (Fiarman, 2017; Fullan, 2014). Fiarman summarized that a mindset of a school that puts all students' success as a priority requires that the leader allows teachers to move into roles that develop their confidence and invoke school growth.

Fullan (2014) emphasized that the practice of principals spending ample time in classrooms working with individual teachers is not an effective utilization of time. He contended that the school leader should seek out teacher leaders to collaborate and assist colleagues to grow as an organization (Fullan, 2014). Fiarman (2017) stated that "teacher leadership sometimes requires that you step outside the previously established norms of collegiality" (p. 24). For effective change to take place in schools, it is not enough for teachers to simply collaborate; rather, school leaders need to provide strategies and procedures for teacher leaders to share effectively with peers to encourage necessary change in practices (Fiarman, 2017; Fullan, 2014). Fiarman stated that school leaders should "turn over work before people are ready to lead it" (p. 26). Fiarman acknowledged that this is difficult for school leaders to do, as it means teachers may make mistakes; but providing job-embedded practice is invaluable experience that builds professional capital. This study of teacher-led professional experiences emphasized the value of job-embedded time when conducting professional learning.

The data for this phenomenon of teacher-led professional experiences identified that teachers took time to consider the needs of their students to make decisions about what they needed to focus on as professionals. The data of this study support the research-based literature for sound practices of school leaders. It is imperative that

school leaders create a climate in their schools that emphasizes teacher-centered professional learning and values the expertise of educators. As this study showed in theory one and theory three, when teachers felt they had autonomy in decision-making and goal setting, it increased their self-efficacy. Therefore, recommended practices for school leaders should include processes that allow for investment in reforms at hand, as these processes result in strengthened school cultures where teachers are eager to continue the learning process and implement initiatives.

Recommendations for Preservice Teachers

This study of teacher-led professional experiences uncovered best practices for facilitating professional development and cumulated recommendations for teachers and school leaders based on these findings. As these recommendations were devised for current practitioners, it became evident that recommendations for perspective educators should also be developed. The demands of teaching are vast and imposed by many sectors. Expectations for public education is influenced by not only the government but also parents and private sectors (Kennedy, 2010). Just as school districts need to meet these ever-changing expectations, teacher education programs also face these same challenges of working to meet the demands of many (Kennedy, 2010). With this understanding, it is more critical than ever to prepare prospective teachers for the education field, and it begins with creating the mindset of professional growth.

The Student Teaching Experience

According to researchers, effective teacher education programs develop avenues for theory to be intertwined with practice that is directly applied in classroom experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Solomon, 2009). The widely used structure of teacher education programs includes “coursework in isolation from practice, then adding a dollop

of student teaching to the end of the program, often in classrooms that do not model the practices previously described in abstraction” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 40). This model of student teaching does not offer continual opportunities for theory to be applied in context, which hinders preservice teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Current research recommends building curriculum around classroom teaching experiences throughout the learning process, so theory and strategies are immediately and routinely applied (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Solomon, 2009).

Throughout the United States, select teacher education programs have redesigned student teaching experiences to model those of medical residencies (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2017). These revised models emphasize professional learning in context throughout the program as preservice teachers are immersed in clinical practice (Guha et al., 2017). This approach aims to explicitly teach perspective teachers with the student demographics in which they will be placed at the beginning of their careers (Guha et al., 2017). According to researchers, for this model to be effective, there must be strong partnerships between school districts and universities so action research and professional learning can take place continuously, not just for an isolated amount of time (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Guha et al., 2017). Researchers refer to schools that are partnered with universities in this capacity as teacher residency programs (Dennis, 2016; Guha et al., 2017).

As this study of teacher-led professional experiences identified, embedded learning is key for teachers to grow in their profession. Just as it is critical for in-service educators, preservice teachers need those experiences as well. Teacher residency programs provide embedded training and support for preservice teachers from the beginning of the program. Darling-Hammond (2012) compared the traditional student

teaching model to the newly revised Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA) which requires preservice teachers to reflect and revise practices as successful teaching professionals do. Dennis (2016) summarized that successful student teaching is not a takeover model, rather it is an ongoing co-teaching experience that involves multiple years of clinical practice. This model allows preservice teachers to authentically experience professional growth in context and continually reflect and revise practices (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Dennis, 2016). This revised student teaching model recognizes the importance of reflection in practice for preservice teachers, as this study of teacher-led professional experiences cumulated these same findings for current practitioners.

The Role of Mentoring

Mentors are a critical part of teacher education programs, as these partnerships set the stage for early career guidance and support (Guha et al., 2017; Solomon, 2009). Previously discussed in Chapter 2, Drago-Severson (2009) discussed that this pillar of adult learning guides the mentee in assessing their early assumptions about teaching and encourages reflection. Effective teacher education programs understand that mentors play a definitive role early on in preservice teacher careers, thus they are carefully selected so professional growth can be sustained (Guha et al., 2017).

While the one-on-one mentorship is recognized as valuable, professional learning schools of residency programs hold the belief that preservice teachers have much to gain from many educators of the school community (Solomon, 2009); thus, residency programs such as Boston Teacher Residency “treats the host community as the mentoring body” (Solomon, 2009, p. 484). This approach extends the professional learning of preservice teachers to have collective experiences that involve multiple educational

demographics to include special education and English as a second language (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Mentors co-teach with perspective teachers in teaching schools where preservice teachers are grouped in university courses to encourage ongoing collaboration (Guha et al., 2017).

This study of teacher-led professional experiences signified the value of collegial relationships, as participants of this study identified collaboration as a critical tenet of this professional learning model. With this understanding, strong mentorships should be an integral part of teacher education programs to encourage collaboration and reflection (Guha et al., 2017; Solomon, 2009). In addition, this study of teacher-led professional experiences surfaced recommendations of effective student teaching experiences for preservice teachers to ensure educators are prepared for the demands of 21st century classrooms. These recommendations cumulate the understandings that embedded professional learning not only benefits in-service educators but also prospective educators.

Implications for Further Study

This study of teacher-led professional experiences led to implications for additional studies. Researchers state that peer observing is one professional learning practice that leads to improved teaching (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Bandura, 1999; Fullan, 2007). While teachers had opportunities to peer observe during this study, they were not motivated to engage in this practice; thus, further studies should be conducted that can connect the contexts in which teachers are motivated to participate in peer observing and how this component of adult learning informs their teaching practices.

The leadership experiences teachers have guide their perceptions of the profession and are paramount to their sustainment in the education field. With this understanding, it

is critical that research continues to be conducted about how to grow teacher leaders. Recent studies have shown that teacher leadership opportunities are essential in all capacities of the profession and that teachers need to lead in areas that directly relate to the teaching and learning of schools (Fiarman, 2017). While this study focused on teachers leading their own professional learning and the adult learning implications that arose from this phenomenon, more research should be conducted that examines school leaders and their role in developing teacher leaders. Additionally, school cultures are pivotal in 21st century education, as the environment in which teachers work contributes to teacher efficacy (Balls et al., 2016); therefore, additional studies should take place that explore conditions of school cultures that support teacher leaders.

Conclusion

Education in the 21st century has evolved to making teaching an exciting time for educators but also a demanding one (Darling-Hammond, 2010). As teachers continue to work toward preparing students for an ever-changing world, it is critical that we continue to educate and grow teachers as well. This ethnographic study sought to understand this phenomenon of teacher-led professional experiences through teachers' eyes. Since educators are those who directly impact students on a daily basis, understanding how to effectively meet teacher learning needs is critical to the future of education.

This study led to theories of teacher learning that shaped the importance of investment in learning initiatives, goal setting, and reflection, all of which positively impacted teacher efficacy. In addition, adult learning approaches were explored to develop understanding of how teachers learn most effectively. This research found that while teachers primarily chose traditional learning methods, it was the supplemental practices of these teacher-led professional experiences that furthered teacher professional

growth. The practices of reflection, collaboration, and embedded time contributed to ongoing teacher learning and led to implementation of newly acquired strategies. It is evident through this study that investment and autonomy were essential in contributing to teacher efficacy and identified that teachers were motivated when provided opportunities to lead.

This phenomenon study uncovered that as education continues to change, so should professional learning. Predetermined, prescribed professional development cannot be the sole solution without embedded practices that provide opportunities for reflection, collaboration, and investment in the new reform. Teachers are professionals who need opportunities to grow. This study cumulated that when teachers are given time to reflect and set their own learning goals, they can effectively facilitate their own learning with support. Support comes in many contexts. Recommendations that were identified for teachers, school leaders, and preservice teachers demonstrated how all aspects of education can be sustained with processes that propel mindsets of growth. While changes will continue to occur in society that will influence education, learning will remain a constant priority in education; thus, the obligation of educational leaders should always be to sustain exceptional learning for both students and teachers.

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Appendix A

Professional Learning Experiences Reflection Guides

Professional Learning Reflection Guide: Day 1

Date:

Team Names:

Elements or topics we are exploring	
Brainstormed or researched ways we want to investigate these topics	
What we've found out about our topic today	
Our next steps or goals for next session	
Needs or requests to be successful for next session	

Professional Learning Reflection Guide: Day 2

Date:

Team Names:

Elements or topics we are exploring	
Reflection of progress since last professional learning day with our topic	
Our ideas of where we want to go next with our topic	
What we've found out or explored about our topic in this session	
Our goals for next session (Session #3)	
Needs or requests to be successful for next session (Session #3)	

Professional Learning Reflection Guide: Day 3

Date:

Team Names:

Topics we are exploring	
Reflection of progress since last professional learning day with our topic	
What we've found out about our topic in this session	
Plan to share out about this topic on the next professional learning day (session #4)	
Plan for implementation of this newly learned knowledge	

Appendix B

Initial Interview Guide

Question Type	Questions
Background of the Participant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefly describe your professional background (for example, what titles you have had, your current role at your school)
Initial Thoughts on the Teacher-Led Professional Experiences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell me how you feel about leading your own professional learning with your partner(s). 2. How would you describe these first two professional learning experiences? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Why do you describe the experience in this way? 3. Do you find any parts of this experience challenging? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If so, what parts and why? 4. Thus far, have you found any parts of these experiences rewarding? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If so, what parts and why?
Initial Thoughts on Adult Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your chosen topic for these professional learning days? 2. What avenues have you and your partner decided to take for learning about your chosen topic? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Why did you choose these methods? 3. What do you feel is beneficial about how you are learning about this topic? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Why do you consider these methods beneficial?
Initial Thoughts Concerning Efficacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you describe your confidence level at this point to accomplish this professional learning goal? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. You mentioned _____ when describing your confidence level, elaborate on your thoughts about that. 2. Do you feel motivated to continue learning about this initiative? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If so, elaborate on why you feel motivated, what about this experience is motivating you? b. If not, elaborate on why you do not feel motivated, what about the experience is not motivating you? 3. Have you and your partner set any goals during this professional experience? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If so, what goals did you set, and why did you choose these goal(s)? b. If not, why did you decide not to set any goals?

Appendix C

Focus Group Questions

1. What do you think about leading your own professional learning this year?
2. In what ways has this process differed from professional development we have used in the past?
3. When choosing your learning topic, what professional aspects about yourself guided your decision?
4. Please share the method you chose to learn about your topic, and why you chose to explore your topic using this method?
5. What parts of this experience did you find most helpful to improve your teaching?
 - a. Elaborate on why you feel this was most helpful.
6. How does this experience support your professional goals?
7. Describe some challenges you faced during this learning process.
8. Of this experience, what did you find was most significant for your professional growth?
9. What have you implemented in your classroom based on what you have learned?
 - a. If you have implemented any of this new knowledge in your classes, how would you describe the success of it?
10. What are your next steps for your professional learning after this experience?
11. What can be done to make this process better or beneficial to other teachers?

Appendix D

Final Interview Guide

Question Type	Questions
Final Thoughts on Teacher Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You chose _____ as your topic for this series of professional learning days. How you applied any of this new knowledge in your classroom? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How did this particular process motivate you to implement these strategies in any way? 2. How did this process of learning engage you to grow professionally? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How did this process engage you differently? 3. How have your perceptions as a leader in your classroom or in the school changed based on this experience? 4. Has this experience changed how you lead learning in your classroom? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If so, how has this experience changed your classroom?
Final Thoughts on Adult Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I know you chose to learn in this way _____, why did you decide to learn about this concept in this capacity? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. For instance, why did you _____ over other methods? 2. You had stated that you feel _____ is beneficial for your learning, now that this process is complete, do you think these are still beneficial components? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If so, elaborate on why you feel this way. b. If not, elaborate on why you feel this way. 3. When you revisited this learning initiative over multiple sessions, did your approach to learning change? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If so, how did it change, and why? b. If not, why did you decide to maintain this same method? 4. Have you engaged in any other learning about this topic outside of these designated professional learning days? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If so, how have you explored further with this topic?

Question Type	Questions
Final Thoughts on Teacher Efficacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you feel in terms of confidence at this later stage? You had stated after the initial professional day that you were _____. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If still motivated, what maintained your motivation? b. If not, what support did you need to have maintained that momentum? 2. What is the most significant factor of this experience that impacted your confidence in the profession, or your development as a teacher? 3. Do you think you will continue exploring with this learning initiative? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If so, elaborate on how you think you will continue? 4. Do you find these professional learning days have value for you as teacher? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If so, how do you value this as professional? b. If not, why do you feel it is not valuable? 5. You had set the goal of _____ at the end of the first professional day in October. To what degree do feel you accomplished this goal? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If so, why do you feel this goal was accomplished? b. If not, why do you feel this goal was not accomplished?

Appendix E

Data Coding Analysis for Theory Development

Theory One: Investment was built through autonomy to choose their own learning topic, and method of learning. Thus, teachers felt empowered through these teacher-led professional experiences.

Research Question: How do teacher-led professional experiences impact teacher efficacy?

Category: Empowering avenues of teacher-led professional learning processes

Sub-category: Choice, investment in learning

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Callie: 129	Was able to find own direction for their learning.	<i>How would you describe this professional experience if you could describe it in words?</i> “We had to really look through all the resources and just do a lot of research and explore and then come up with our direction that we wanted to go in. And so, we decided on a conference to go to and said you know from there then we can maybe narrow it down a little bit more. So, it was definitely I would say very exploratory.”
Callie: 136	State that she had not learned as much in past PDs, found topic she chose as benefiting her own learning.	<i>What’s beneficial about the way you are learning about this topic?</i> “I really haven’t learned a whole lot in the past. I don’t think it’s ever really been a huge focus of any kind of professional development. So, it’s actually nice to really learn about how different people can bring global issues into their classrooms...” “So it’s nice to actually learn about it because I’ve never really learned about it before. It’s like a whole new experience for me.”
Callie: 221	She was invested in this learning topic, and feels she gained professionally from the experience.	<i>Do you find these professional days have value for you as a teacher?</i> “I think so. It’s definitely helped me, almost like when people do passion projects for their kids, I kind of felt like it was a little bit like that. You know you choose something that you’re really interested in, and you research, then develop a plan. So, I think it is definitely meaningful on these days, and I feel like I’m getting a lot out of it.”
Donna: 40	Self-paced identified as benefit, was able to focus on own needs without having to consider own needs of the group.	<i>What’s beneficial about the way you are learning about this topic?</i> “Very self-paced, very specific for what I want to do. I feel like I’ve really been able to focus on what I want to focus on and not have to worry about is it something that other people need to need or from other teachers’ perspectives.”
Donna: 42	Opportunity present to self-teach, experiment, and autonomy to learn on one’s own.	<i>How would you describe your confidence level at this point to accomplish this professional learning goal?</i> “I feel pretty confident. I feel like I’ve used a lot of the things that I’ve learned and sort of self-taught as well as what I’ve learned from professional development workshop opportunities and it’s been really nice to figure it out for myself.”

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Emma: 186	Found the process meaningful due to having autonomy to select their own learning topic.	<i>What do you think about leading your own professional learning this year?</i> “In the past we’ve taken surveys as to what everybody wanted to do, and they voted on what did. It’s just been laid out for us, and been determined for us. This way is much more meaningful.”
Frank: 84	Found value in having autonomy to learn using own chosen method.	<i>Tell me how you feel about leading your professional learning with your partner.</i> “On that particular day we both treated things a little bit differently, both fitting in the way that we are, personality wise. My partner was interested more in seminars. I’m not a big seminar fan, I can get more out of a book more quickly. So, that was my idea and we’re all doing different things, which is another reason why we work well together.”
Frank: 92	Feels chosen method of learning fits his learning needs, thus autonomy to choose was empowering. Chose book because it fits his learning needs. He feels that this method is tailored for him.	<i>Any particular avenues that you and your partner decided to take for your chosen topic?</i> “My partner is looking at seminars more than I am. I think a book is more efficient for me.” <i>You chose this method for efficiency?</i> “For me, everybody learns differently, I’m a book learner. You give me a book and I learned how to use five different computer programming languages. Other people have to sit and play around, or go to a seminar. This way just fits how I learn.”
Frank: 93	Feels having independence to learn in his way gives him autonomy and aids in his own professional learning.	“That’s one of the good things about this because there’s freedom. You know I think too often in education we know that kids learn differently. We look at teachers and we’re like oh they all learn the same, let’s go to this professional development and sit in a room for three hours, and all learn in a room for three hours. We just don’t all learn the same way.”
Frank: 94	Recognizes the need for differentiation of adult learners.	“We’re just like kids, and so far, that’s been a good thing in this, it doesn’t make the assumption that we’re all going to be the exact same kind of learners as teachers.”
Frank: 96	Motivated by having the opportunity to choose.	<i>Do you feel motivated to continue to learn about this initiative?</i> “absolutely.” <i>Why do you feel motivated to continue learning?</i> “I got to pick, having that option of choice is a powerful thing.”
Joe: 192	Having control over their own professional learning helped create initiative to learn.	<i>What parts of this experience did you find most helpful to improve your teaching?</i> “I would say that this makes it a lot more exciting. You feel like you’re not wasting any time. You really have control of what you’re doing and that’s a huge advantage in comparison to more traditional professional development formats.”

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Joe: 184	Able to focus on what he found valuable for his own learning.	<i>What do you think about leading your own professional learning this year?</i> “This lets us focus on what we need to use time doing, and lets us help each other find weaknesses and find things to fill in where we need things propped up or new materials.”
Joe: 195	There was motivation to implement new knowledge gained from this process due to the autonomy to focus on his own needs.	<i>What have you implemented in your classroom so far based on what you learned during the professional learning days?</i> “The one big advantage of this format is the percentage of what I get in the professional development that turns into classroom stuff is much higher. It's like in the 80 to 90 percent range compared to 10 to 20 percent which is still good but I feel like because of this focus I'm able to spend most of my time on things that I know I need, not necessarily something another subject is going to need, instead it is very centered on my curriculum.”
Lucy: 100	Felt initial experience allowed the group of learners to self-guide and set their own goals. Found ability to choose was empowering.	<i>Tell me how you feel about leading your professional learning with your group.</i> “It was nice to be able to self-guide through especially with our small group of five. I feel like we are very like-minded, and even though we picked different standards to set our goals, we immediately wanted them to be interwoven, which I thought was really powerful. And so just being able to choose and have a direction to start off the year was empowering.”
Lucy: 108	Liked having options, acknowledged that teachers learn differently.	<i>What's beneficial about the way you are learning about this topic?</i> “It wasn't just I had to pick a professional development, like something I had to go to. I like the option because, of course, we all learn differently. And for me, I would rather take information from a book, and so I enjoyed pairing those two together. Like us discussing as a group about what professional developments that we wanted to do, and how we could relate to maybe a text that we found.”
Lucy: 202	Autonomy to choose her own method empowered her to learn.	<i>How did you decide to learn about this concept in this capacity?</i> “I've been grateful that I haven't been forced to go on one path I've had multiple paths to choose from. I think if I would have been forced by hearing, I want you to pick a professional development that you have to go see I don't think it would have been as valuable for me. So, I like the fact that I got to choose based on my own learning style.”
Lucy: 205	Found the freedom to choose as significant to her learning.	<i>What is the most significant factor of this experience that impacted your confidence in the profession?</i> “I think just the freedom to choose is really empowering I feel like a lot, especially in field of education, people are constantly mandating how classrooms should look and what they would like to see out of it. So, getting to pick how I want to encourage my students has been probably the best part about it.”

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Lucy: 206	Feels empowered because she is able to choose her own learning needs, and implement strategies based on students' needs.	<i>In what ways do you think these experiences have value for you?</i> "I think that it encourages me to do my own research. I think they it's definitely. I feel like it's very teacher centered. But in doing so it becomes student centered because teachers know what's best for their kids. So, when we get to choose our own needs, the kids needs get met."
Lucy: 99	Found initial experience had focus and purpose for their own professional learning.	<i>Tell me how you feel about leading your professional learning with your group.</i> "I found it was really enjoyable, and for the first time there was a purpose and direction with our planning and our professional development."
Marty: 229	He was empowered, and followed through with his goal because he felt invested in the initiative he chose.	<i>In what ways do you feel like that this learning experience values you as a professional?</i> "I think that you just trusted us to pick our goal and go and develop with it. And having the outline just helped. Day one was most important one, when I just laid it all out. I didn't even have to like try that hard to follow it because it was just what I wanted to do."
Marty: 73	Finds benefit of being able to choose own learning goal.	<i>What's beneficial about the way you are learning about this topic?</i> "So it's nice that I actually got to choose. This one has to do with math and that's what I want to bring into my classroom. So, it was different due to that. I actually got to pick what I wanted to learn about."
Marty: 81:	Finds value in topic chosen, thus is motivated to continue to learn about it.	<i>Have you and your partner set any goals during this professional time, short-term or long-term?</i> "We find inherent value in utilizing technology in preparing for kids for a technology dependent world. I think it was just that we're going to try and incorporate these things and work with the resources we found."
Nancy: 1	Investment present through choice in learning topic.	<i>Tell me how you feel about leading your professional learning with your partner.</i> "I think it went extremely well because we kind of had buy into it. We got to choose what we wanted to learn about and it made it more exciting, and that way we have ownership in it."
Nancy: 14	Investment present due to interest in learning topic chosen.	<i>What's beneficial about the way you are learning about this topic?</i> "Well, I guess more than anything, it's something we're of interest in, so we have buy into it. So, anytime you buy into it, it is something that you know that you will use, and will be of interest to you, and it will help you when you're in your curriculum, and in your job altogether, and that makes all the difference."

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Susan: 185	Autonomy to facilitate their own learning brought enthusiasm to the experience.	<i>What do you think about leading your own professional learning this year?</i> “I also think that just giving us our own autonomy makes us more excited for the professional learning day. It makes us more enthusiastic. There is no negativity coming in about maybe having a prescheduled set up or things that we're going to do that's really not going to be beneficial within our classroom.”

Theory Two: Through these teacher-led professional experiences, reflection took place, which empowered teachers to focus on their learning needs. This ongoing reflection established teachers' readiness to engage in adult learning tasks, and strengthen their craft.

Research Question: How do teacher-led professional experiences impact teacher efficacy?

Research Question: In teacher-led professional experiences, how do teachers choose to learn, and how that impact the way we approach adult learning?

Category: Empowering avenues of teacher-led professional learning processes

Sub-category: Focused on self-needs, reflection of strengths and weaknesses

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Alice: 168	Evidence of reflection with own teaching craft, self-awareness of own strengths and weaknesses.	<i>What is your end goal for this learning initiative?</i> "I feel like this conference kept challenging us to look at ourselves first. We have to recognize our strengths and weaknesses first. I feel like I need to set that stage, and I hope to overcome my fear of discussing difficult topics with my students. That is one of my personal goals."
Anne: 149	Reflective practice taking place, this experience has encouraged teacher to want to improve previous lessons.	<i>What is your progress so far with this learning topic you're exploring?</i> "I think it is making us rethink some of our lessons. And kind of push the kids a little harder to think for themselves."
Callie: 127	Was able to focus on what she wanted to learn about, tailored to her own needs.	<i>Tell me how you feel about leading your professional learning with your partner.</i> "I was actually kind of excited to be able to decide what I want to work on instead of maybe the county or other measures deciding this is what we're all going to work on because I feel sometimes in the past where it's like oh differentiation and I have had so much professional development on differentiation and I feel like I do that pretty well. It was nice for us to work on this together, it was like a small study group."
Donna: 35	This process initially enabled her to reflect on own strengths and weaknesses to determine her professional learning needs.	<i>How would you describe this professional experience if you could describe it in words?</i> "Very self-reflective. I think I was able to really understand my own background as a teacher. Figure out my strengths and my weaknesses, and really focus where I needed to work."

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Donna: 35	This process initially enabled her to reflect on own strengths and weaknesses to determine her professional learning needs.	<i>How would you describe this professional experience if you could describe it in words?</i> “Very self-reflective. I think I was able to really understand my own background as a teacher. Figure out my strengths and my weaknesses, and really focus where I needed to work.”
Donna: 37	Participant was able to focus on what she wanted to improve upon.	<i>Have you found any parts of this experience particularly rewarding?</i> “Definitely, it’s been really nice to hone in on the areas that I want to improve on and figure out ways to use technology in class and make it more effective instructionally.”
Donna: 38	Evidence of self-reflection, chose the topic to strengthen her craft.	<i>Can you describe your chosen topic for these professional learning days?</i> “Ok, it’s just utilizing technology for instructional purposes and broadening my different instructional practices. One of the things that I feel like I’ve really struggled with is varying my instructional practices throughout the year, and I feel like technology is a great way to change it up each unit.”
Donna: 40	Participant was able to focus on her own needs.	<i>What’s beneficial about the way you are learning about this topic?</i> “Very self-paced, very specific for what I want to do. I feel like I’ve really been able to focus on what I want to focus on and not have to worry about is it something that other people need or from other teachers’ perspectives.”
Eve: 19, 20	This process allowed the participant to spend time working on things they found meaningful.	<i>Tell me how you feel about leading your professional learning with your partner.</i> “I think it’s positive, at least we are spending our time doing things that we want to do, or feel that we need to work on. It’s not something that is so broad that it doesn’t even potentially affect us. So it’s nice to be forced to work on things that you know you want to work on.”
Eve: 241	This process enabled her to reflect about what she could differently to strengthen her teaching craft.	<i>How did this series of professional learning days engage you professionally?</i> “It forced me and my partner to dig a little deeper I guess, and really talk about how we could incorporate this, instead of just doing what we already have been doing. Since it’s my second year it was like oh well I did this last year but, this kind of forced me to stop for a second and think if there were other options.”
Frank: 208	He found reflection valuable to improving his craft.	<i>How did this process of learning engage you to professionally?</i> “But it’s amazing what you can get out of just two hours of self-reflection as far as what you do on a daily basis and how you do it and what resources you can bring in to help you do that better.”
Frank: 89	Found chosen method (reading book) was meaningful. Stated that reflecting and choosing topic to improve upon then you will grow professionally.	<i>Have you found any parts of this experience particularly rewarding?</i> The book so far, and just thinking about if we all just picked one topic every year whether you’re experienced or not, looked to improve in that way then you’re never going to go backwards.”

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Frank: 97	Allowed him to reflect on what his own needs are, and make his own choice about what he needs to work on.	<i>Why do you feel motivated to continue learning?</i> “Once again we’re back to that concept of reflection where you have the chance to sit down and look at some things and say ok you know, I’m good here, and here, and here but you know I can improve on this. And by making that choice, it is not just the fact that you’ve got options, it’s the fact that instead of somebody else saying you’ve got a deficiency, let’s fix it, you’re saying hey, I’m not perfect, I need to learn.”
Hannah: 183	Identifies next steps as reflecting about new strategy and making changes as needed.	<i>What are your next steps to continue to learning about this chosen topic?</i> “We need to see how this works. After we see how this goes, then I guess we’ll have to do what we did before, decide if it worked or not, and if we need to change something or if we can keep going with how we’re doing, or add something to what we already have.”
Hannah: 197	Reflection was present when deciding upon the area of focus for the professional learning.	<i>I know that you chose to learn by researching and collaborating with your partner. Why did you choose to learn about this concept in this capacity?</i> “I felt it was something I really needed to work on. And I felt like it was also a very key part to what the students needed, so I want to be better versed in that area.”
Jay: 47	Focused on own subject area. Participant was able to have conversations about content specific needs.	<i>Tell me how you feel about leading your professional learning with your group.</i> “I think it allows us to have really good conversation on what we need to teach middle school students social studies, content-specific rather than grade-level specific because a lot of times we struggle to get students engaged in social studies.”
Jay: 58	Feels motivated because professional learning needs are content-based, not broad. He feels it is tailored more to his needs.	<i>What about this experience motivates you in terms of the particular learning day as opposed to other methods?</i> “I think it’s good to have content level time together across grade levels.”
Lucy: 205	She found the freedom to choose significant to her professional learning.	<i>What is the most significant factor of this experience that impacted your confidence in the profession?</i> “I think just the freedom to choose is really empowering I feel like a lot, especially in field of education, people are constantly mandating how classrooms should look and what they would like to see out of it. So, getting to pick how I want to encourage my students has been probably the best part about it.”
Marty: 222	Reflection took place during the process. He continually reflected on his goal to build his craft.	<i>How has this particular process with the professional learning days helped make you to implement these strategies?</i> “I think it’s just gave time to reflect on them and come up with some ideas. I mean really it laid the foundation. The first day it planted the seed for thinking about how can I make instruction relevant, and how can incorporate more technology in my classroom. It was just building on those so I always kept that in mind.”

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Marty: 74	Identifies that this process allowed him to focus on his subject-area needs, feels that other professional developments do always fit his needs.	<i>What do you feel is beneficial about how you're learning about your chosen topic?</i> "As a math teacher, I feel like a lot of things we are talked about in professional developments, and so much time spent on things that are just different for the math classroom. We just have a different type of classroom."
Marty: 76	Recognized through reflection that he needs to integrate his learning topic into his classroom more often.	<i>How would you describe your confidence level at this point to accomplish this learning goal?</i> "Yes...I'm getting used to integrating and using math to develop a 21st century foundation for mathematics, so I definitely have a lot to learn, a lot to explore, and what I have explored is great. And I need to do a better job about integrating it more often."
Rhonda: 174	Evidence of reflection when strategy was tried which was developed on first professional learning day, and revisited upon application on second professional learning day.	"It was overwhelming. They needed something more concrete, that process was very abstract to understand the problem. So, I tried having them write out the question but then realized what the connection from the skill to the problem. So, with this new graphic organizer that will come together."

Theory Three: Teacher-led professional experiences encouraged teachers to set goals to explore new teaching concepts. This continuing experience, in turn, motivated teachers to implement this newly acquired knowledge.

Research Question: How do teacher-led professional experiences impact teacher efficacy?

Category: Contributions to teachers' confidence

Sub-category: Goal setting, implementation

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Alice: 158	Evidence of initial implementation of new strategy acquired through learning experience.	<i>What parts have been successful so far?</i> “I’ve started using some of the things I’ve learned already. For this next unit, I started with a sort, which is a discussion protocol I learned. The kids sorted terrible things that happen in the classroom from bad to worse. We sorted things we have control over, and then we moved into a character discussion from our novel. So, I’ve already started incorporating some things.”
Anne: 144	Partner agrees that the initial resource they found serves a purpose, but not their learning goal. Evidence of reflection and trial and error.	<i>How are you tackling learning about this topic?</i> “We see it as a review tool. It looks very beneficial in the end like when we review the material, and they can go through the material, if they need to. But as far as allowing them to test new ideas, it’s not so much that.”
Anne: 145	Exploration and synthesis of new knowledge has encouraged potential transfer of new ideas to classroom.	“Something we had thought about is maybe instead of, when we do usually do our frog dissection during the human body system, we could have each group be like doctors and each frog is a patient with a health problem. Then they would have to be able to take out the disease, and explain to us what they found.”
Anne: 146	Evidence of through collaboration, teacher group tried new ideas found from the first learning day in their classroom.	<i>How are you able to bridge learning from today to the pervious learning day?</i> “Well, we took things that we talked about last time and incorporated them like the egg drop in the rollercoaster lab.”
Anne: 151	Planning to include more problem-based learning in upcoming units.	<i>What are your next steps for continuing to learn about this?</i> “We are coming up with our ideas for human body because we are going into that. By our next meeting, we will be meeting our new students, getting ready to look back at our energy and meteorology unit. We had already covered that before our first meeting, so we’re going to be looking at things for that.”
Anne: 152	Identified goal as having problem-based lessons for units in standards.	<i>What is your end goal for this learning initiative?</i> “I think it would be great for us to have these problem-based lessons for each major unit that we cover, and incorporate the majority of the concepts that they have to have within the units.”

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Callie: 140	Has set goal to implement new projects in class, and attend collaborative county-wide meetings.	<i>Have you and your partner set any goals during this professional experience that you want to accomplish?</i> “Yes, we definitely both talked about some projects we wanted to bring into the classroom, and also joining up with the global educator meetings in the county.”
Donna: 236	The new skill learned during this experience was implemented in the classroom.	<i>To what degree do you feel like you accomplished this goal?</i> “I’ve accomplished it pretty well, in fact, I used Flip Grid today. So, I achieved what I set out to do. The next time I use it will be a little bit more smooth.”
Eve: 31	Goal set to incorporate strategies of cross-subject integration into their lessons.	<i>Have you and your partner set any goals during this professional experience that you want to accomplish?</i> “I think to just try to talk to language arts and do some NewsELA articles, and then the labs that incorporate math, have them try to do the problems themselves.”
Frank: 209	He felt empowered as this learning process continued, and sought more knowledge about his topic.	<i>Have you engaged in any other learning about this topic outside of these designated professional days?</i> “This learning process has encouraged me to go out and look for other things about assessments after the actual day.”
Frank: 98	An individual goal was set to learn strategies from book, and implement those in classroom.	<i>Have you and your partner set any goals during this professional experience that you want to accomplish?</i> “But obviously for me, I’ve picked a book, I’ve got a book, I’m reading a book. Once I’ve read it, and these are the things I’ve tried, and these are the things I want to try, and these are the results I’m getting back.”
Hannah: 125	Partners have tried out strategy, and are planning on next time collaborating about implementation and reflect.	<i>Have you and your partner set any goals during this professional experience that you want to accomplish?</i> “Our main goal was to use the list of questions we came up with, and see how it went. Then come back together, and see if we need to change anything, or if we needed to add anything to it.”
Hannah: 173	Evidence of implementing initially learned strategy, and revision of strategy to work towards fitting students’ needs.	<i>What avenues did you use to figure out how to help your students?</i> “First we started with the skills and then realized that the kids were getting too hung up on the steps are a lot for them to do. So, we needed something that they were still doing it without realizing they were. And we realized that we needed to focus more on the understanding, not just the skill.”
Hannah: 199	At the end of the experience, she is routinely utilizing the new skill.	<i>To what degree do you feel like you accomplished this goal?</i> “I feel like I implement it each day. I’ve done a much better job of making sure that the students understand the why.”
Joe: 196	New strategies acquired during the learning days are incorporated in his classroom instruction after time has passed.	<i>What are your next steps for your professional learning after this experience?</i> “Each time so far we have found brand new stuff we can use, and a lot of it goes into a file that I share with my counterpart. Then the next time we sit down and plan the next segment we add extra things that we got out of the learning days. There’s things I’m doing this semester that I didn’t do last semester because we found it during the last two professional days. Every time we have these I come out with more things that I needed.”

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Lucy: 200	The new knowledge acquired in these professional experiences have led to further research, and more learning.	<i>How have you applied any of this new knowledge in your classroom so far?</i> “Oh, my goodness, I'm not sure I could fully explain how much I've used it in my class. I think that just individual skills I've found through this research, and the research that I was allowed to do has led me to so much more research. I'm actually surprised at how much of a snowball it's been and I know that I've come to you a couple times, telling you I've found this because of this. I've been able to use it in my classroom. I find myself seeking activities that I can implement those strategies more because I know that they'll be more effective.”
Mark: 143	Explored and used new software program, found through trial and error, it was not what was needed.	<i>How are you tackling learning about this topic?</i> “Right now we are exploring what is out there. We are finding a lot of what is out there, like M Curriculum, is not really problem-based. It is more or less they learn something and regurgitate it. It's not really using the cognitive skills where they work things out.”
Marty: 223	Process enabled him to pick a goal, and focus on it over multiple sessions. This provided continuity, which increased implementation.	<i>How did this process of learning engage you to grow professionally?</i> “I think it just provoked me to make a particular goal and narrow it down like the 21st century relevant instruction and go after that instead of just getting lost in the vastness of everything. You know this experience just honed in on one specific thing, and it actually worked really well. I felt like I picked a really applicable field to better myself, and so now I'm building on that.”
Marty: 63	Researched online instructional tool on first professional learning day, and integrated it in classroom.	<i>Tell me how you feel about leading your own professional learning experience with your partner.</i> “One of the things we explored was Brain Genie. So, I knew about that, and I researched it more for about a week, then I was ok this is amazing so I started integrating that.”
Nancy: 18	Have goal to implement new online tool of google classroom by adding tests online for students.	<i>Have you and your partner set any goals during this professional experience that you want to accomplish?</i> Yes, we would like to get tests on there, and even if it's open notes or whatever it may be to help our EC kids...”
Nancy: 215	Nancy continued to explore with this learning initiative outside of the learning time.	<i>Have you engaged in any other learning about this topic outside of these designated professional days?</i> “Oh, absolutely, like at night when you're watching a ballgame or something like that, I'll pull it up and say I might try to this or this, you know different things. It's kind of exciting. It's not dull, it's something that's going to be very advantageous for me.”
Nancy: 217	Stated that goal was accomplished, and that she was proud of the accomplishment.	<i>To what degree do you feel you accomplished your goal?</i> “Basically 100 percent, and I am proud of that. It was a big stretch for me.”

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Rhonda: 174	Evidence of strategy that tried from first professional learning day, and revisited upon application on second professional learning day.	“It was overwhelming (referring to initial strategy). They needed something more concrete, that process was very abstract to understand the problem. So, I tried having them write out the question but then realized what the connection from the skill to the problem. So, with this new graphic organizer that will come together.”

Theory Four: The methods of learning in this study were traditional professional development methods. Thus, teachers find these established methods are meaningful for their professional learning needs.

Research Question: In teacher-led professional experiences, how do teachers choose to learn, and how does that impact the way we approach adult learning?

Category: Methods of learning

Sub-category: topics are 21st century skills, methods of are traditional

Pseudo Name: Code	Chosen Topic	Method Chosen for Learning
Anne: 142, 143	Developing and testing innovative ideas	Explored resources on the internet. Purchased software per request from first learning day. Anne and her partner explored this software program. Also, collaborated through dialogue.
Callie: 129, 131, 135	Bringing global perspectives into the classroom, and making them relevant to students	Explored resources online, attended Worldview conference, and expressed plans of attending monthly global educator county meetings
Eve: 24, 25	Integration of other subjects into science	Researched resources via online
Frank: 90,	Formative assessment	Chose to read book independently
Hannah: 119, 120	Problem-solving strategies	Explored resources via online
Jay: 51, 52	Integration of technology and differentiation strategies	Group pursued two workshops, and chose books to read. Jay did not attend the workshops.
Joe: 247	Critical thinking skills and differentiation	Explored resources on the internet. Colleagues went to a differentiation workshop, and the group collaborated to share the new knowledge.
Lucy: 105, 107	Critical thinking skills	Four books were ordered upon group's request to read. Lucy read one of the books, was inspired, and requested the companion book to read.
Marty: 70, 71, 72	21st century technological tools	Exploring resources on internet including pedagogical and interactive sites for students to use. Also, met with high school teachers to understand potential relevance of 21st century skills in their career technical courses on second learning day.
Nancy: 9, 10, 12, 13	Integration of Google Classroom technological tools	Reflected and made outline for learning, then asked for expert or colleague to come and teach them. Colleague came and taught Nancy and partner on second professional learning day. Nancy and partner developed their own questions to be answered about Google Classroom prior to that day.

Pseudo Name: Code	Chosen Topic	Method Chosen for Learning
Susan: 248	Integration of technology tools for literacy skills	Collaboration, and exploration of school resources in the library to aid in literacy development. Also, explored new technology tools, and experimented with those online programs in the classroom.

Theory Five: These teacher-led professional experiences established opportunities for collegial relationships to strengthen, and meaningful collaboration to take place.

Research Question: In teacher-led professional experiences, how do teachers choose to learn, and how does that impact the way we approach adult learning?

Category: Tenets of adult learning

Sub-category: collaboration, relationships

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Alice: 165	Finds collegial relationship this experience provided as valuable.	“But it’s great to have someone to bounce ideas off of. Because while I can do fine on my own, Callie gives me perspectives I had not thought of.”
Amy: 193	Found collaborative time beneficial for new ideas to try in her classroom.	<i>What parts of this experience did you find most helpful to improve your teaching?</i> “I think it's nice to be able to sit and listen to other teachers, and get to take the time to be able to hear ideas and think I like that idea, that's something I would like to try my classroom.”
Callie: 132	Identified opportunities to collaborate with other teachers in the county from conference attended.	<i>Do you find any parts of this experience so far particularly rewarding?</i> “I felt it was really excellent, and we were able to realize other Haywood County people were going, and we were able to hook up with them, and learn that they also have meetings once a month on global perspectives. So that is another thing that [partner] and I are going to try to go to, to continue this professional development.”
Callie: 133	Initially, this experience enabled her to make new connections.	“So, yes, that was good to connect with other people in the county too.”
Callie: 137	Found the opportunity to collaborate with others who have the same interests to be beneficial.	<i>This method you used of attending the conference, what do you think was better about this chosen method as other methods?</i> “I think just being surrounded by people who are also passionate about the same thing because sometimes when you have someone come in and do a professional development, some people are not really interested in it, while some are.”
Callie: 141	Has goal to further collaborate with others from the county.	<i>Have you and your partners set any goals during this professional experience for the future?</i> “Yes, we definitely both talked about some projects we wanted to bring into the classroom, and also be joining up with the global educator meetings in Haywood County. So those are some of our goals right now, is to go there see what other people are doing and then come back, and talk to see how we can bring that in.”
Callie: 164	Finds collaborative a benefit to understanding how to use the newly acquired knowledge.	<i>What are your next steps to learn about your chosen topic?</i> “I think our next session just really sitting down and hash out some plans to help each other think of all the possibilities because our plans will be different.”

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Callie: 219	Collegial relationship was established through this experience, and it was maintained outside of the designated learning time.	<i>When you revisited this learning initiative over the multiple sessions did your approach to learning change at all?</i> “We took initiative when we would come across something that was like oh I saw this really cool thing about storytelling, and I'd send it to her. You know and she would see something really cool about social justice and bringing that into the classroom she would send it to me. So, we kind of kept an eye out for our focuses for each other even though what we were focusing on was a little bit different. We were able to keep each other in mind. And you know I sent her a couple things at times, and said this looks awesome.”
Donna: 232	Collaborative time provided was meaningful.	<i>How did this process of the professional learning days engage you to grow professionally?</i> “Well I mean being able to work with other people and utilize the time that was given to us to bounce ideas off of each other that was crucial because you know we don't often get that opportunity especially across grade levels. So, it was good to work with people and have those people in other grade levels to bounce ideas off of.”
Karla: 191	Found having cross-grade level collaborative time beneficial for her professional learning.	<i>What parts of this experience did you find most helpful to improve your teaching?</i> “I also just liked working with other teachers that are the same department as me but I normally don't work with, like I planned a lot with seventh grade during these days. We were researching this topic because I don't normally see them so, we were able to share our different ideas from workshops we had attended before.”
Lucy: 109	Identifies collaboration as important component for implementation of new strategies discovered.	<i>What are your plans for using the professional learning?</i> “I think that it will just generate this really cohesive professional learning community, like today my partner is going to this differentiation workshop, and she will come back and share. Then, I will read this text, and they can take things that are going to be important to all of us. I feel like almost we're getting more information that way because it's not just me going to one professional development, and not communicating with everybody else.”
Lucy: 203	Found the opportunity to collaborate and learn from others as valuable to her own professional goals.	<i>When you revisited this learning initiative over multiple sessions did your approach to learning change?</i> “Although I have liked hearing what other people have glean from theirs. I think the fact that I did that all of us were able to bring back what we learned in our own chosen settings has been equally as valuable. I don't think I would have got as much out of it as if I would have attended something but I liked the fact that other teachers have brought back the highlights so that I could enjoy this opportunity.”

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Marty: 79	Feels motivated to potentially collaborate with others through this experience.	<i>You said you feel motivated to continue, what do you feel about this experience is motivating you?</i> “Yeah, just the fact that I have plenty of time and resources to explore more. I’d say I would like to talk to other teachers next time about my goal, that would be really nice.”
Marty: 80	Reached to another teacher after first professional learning day. Experience encouraged seeking out collegial discussion outside of designated time.	“It happened, I actually went and called my partner, and said hey did you set it up in Moby Max this way, and she said you should try Brain Genie instead. Ok, I’ll try that, and it turned out to be amazing.”
Nancy: 17	Sees learning from colleague as beneficial.	<i>You have made an outline, where do you hope to go from here with your learning?</i> “We were offered to go to a two-day workshop but that wasn’t conducive for us, so somebody is going to come to us so we can glean from them. So, it is my understanding they are getting ready for us. We gave them our questions and they are going to meet with us on Monday, so we’re excited.”
Nancy: 213	Collaboration played a role in helping her grow professionally.	<i>How did this process of the professional learning days engage you to grow professionally?</i> “Well, the collaboration was a big part in it because at the very beginning when we had PLCs all during the year where we were able to discuss, and say well what can you do to make this better. So, then I would have to get research that. And that just made me held a little bit more accountable.”
Nancy: 7	Believes this experience will grow collegial relationship.	<i>Have you found any parts of this experience particularly rewarding so far?</i> “Yes, it’s been good working with my partner, with him being my new co-teacher, that way we can kind of work together, and that brings us closer, and we can see the success together. So, I think that’s very rewarding.”

Additional Findings

Theory Six: This experience provides designated, embedded time for teachers to explore learning needs, and engage in professional learning. Teachers found this time valuable.

Category: Contributions to teachers' development

Sub-category: Time

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Callie: 220	Found time valuable for being able to research an initiative, and follow through with implementation.	<i>What is the most significant factor of this experience the impact your confidence in the profession as a teacher?</i> "Just having time to really sit down and think about this. You know having that time during the professional days to really research into the topic because sometimes that's the biggest factor, you would want to do this project but there just isn't time to sit down and do it. So, having that carved out for us several times throughout the year was really beneficial to kind of sticking with it."
Donna: 234	Found the embedded time to engage in her own learning needs was valuable for continuing her learning.	<i>Why do I feel like is you're still motivated to continue this learning initiative?</i> "It's nice to have the time set aside to look into things different ways to implement technology because I don't have a lot of free time myself at home so having the professional days and those opportunities to explore is really crucial for me."
Frank: 207	Found having time during the instructional calendar valuable for his professional needs.	<i>How did this process of learning engage you to professionally?</i> "It makes you take the time. Like anybody, your first inclination is oh I've got so much to get done on my planning time. But it's amazing what you can get out of just two hours of self-reflection as far as what you do on a daily basis."
Jay: 54	Acknowledges that he needs time to focus on his own professional learning, away from distractions.	<i>What do you feel is beneficial about how you're choosing to learn about this topic?</i> "I think it's good anytime you can get away and focus, and not worry about the next morning's lesson, or what you're going to do with your family that night. Even if you're just away for a night, you can really focus. I've just been to conferences in the past, and it really focuses you and helps you to learn."

Pseudo Name: Code	Analysis of Code	Quote from transcript
Lucy: 113	Describes that the ongoing, embedded days provides time to learn and implement new professional learning.	<i>Have you and your partners set any goals during the experience for where you want to be a certain point with critical thinking goal?</i> “It’s nice that this is broken up into three chunks because you can learn and then implement. Then I feel like towards the end of the year we’re going to be able to synthesize what our experiences were.”
Marty: 64	Identified the value of having time to explore new resources and collaborate.	<i>Tell me how you feel about leading your professional learning with your partner.</i> “But as teachers just time management is so hard, do I check out this website, or do I grade these papers. So, you know I grade the papers. So, it’s nice to have time to really explore the internet for new resources, and real world applications. Yeah, it was good.
Marty: 69	Found having time to explore and focus on his professional learning needs as beneficial.	<i>Did you find any parts of this experience particularly rewarding?</i> “So it was nice to for you to say here’s a chunk of time to explore online resources, things that can help kids in the 21st technologically dependent century, and so that was nice to be able to just focus on that.”
Marty: 78	Factor of having time motivating him to continue to learn about this topic.	<i>You said you feel motivated, elaborate on your motivation, what motivating you to keep going?</i> “Yes, so just the topic itself is motivating, and I want to go out and explore more and more. Right now, I have six or seven resources, I just need time to sit down and go through, and play with those. It took me about a little over an hour just to set up one of the websites. Yeah, you know just the fact that I have plenty of time and resources to more explore more.”
Nancy: 216	Found the embedded time as significant to having opportunities to collaborate, gain new ideas, and help each other.	<i>What about this learning process with these professional days did you feel that it was advantageous for you?</i> “The time, the time to be able to just sit and talk, and just say we’ve done this with these ideas. It was a discussion. So, you had time to discuss, time if you ran into a glitch, another person was there who could help out with that. That’s been amazing.”
Susan: 190	Found the embedded time to collaborate, and explore her own learning needs as beneficial to her growth as a professional.	<i>What parts of this experience did you find most helpful that to improve your teaching?</i> “I’ll just say having the freedom and the time it was extremely helpful. The freedom to just explore any topic that our department thought was meaningful, and then obviously just that free time in order to do so having that structure of being able to explore in the way that we found best, that time to go to the library, or search on the computer, or talk to our colleagues. It just let us behave as the professionals that we are. I think this was really helpful.”