4-30-2021

Coequal Responsibility for Feedback and Trust in Teacher Professional Development

Stefanie Whitney
whitneys@csp.edu

Coequal Responsibility for Feedback and Trust in Teacher Professional Development

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, ST. PAUL BY

Stefanie Whitney

Dr. Frederick Dressen, Advisor

April 2021

Acknowledgements

Writing this is most certainly bittersweet. There are not words that adequately capture my appreciation for the guidance, compassion, curiosity, and understanding that so many have offered through this writing and learning process.

First, I want to thank Mom, Dad, Staci, and Paul: My first teachers. You encouraged me to learn, nurtured my curiosity, and most certainly answered lots of questions. Through all of you, I learned how to laugh—even at the most challenging times. Dad: You teach by your very example. I needed the lessons you have taught me about remaining resolute and tenacious and living by my values. Mom: I was hesitant to start this program, in part because I was afraid you would not be here to witness, in person, my finish. I know that you have always been with me. It was through you that I learned courage, resilience, grace under pressure, and to love what others may view as the smallest moments and details, for they are always the most significant.

Next, I want to recognize and appreciate members of Concordia's EdD program. Dr. Frederick Dressen: My deepest gratitude for helping me find the confidence to paint outside the lines and providing the wisdom to anchor me back inside of them when necessary. My professional path is forever altered because of your encouragement in my writing and guidance in my leadership. Dr. Gwen Peyton and Dr. Katherine Maguire, I sincerely appreciate every conversation and bit of feedback. Your lived experiences and guidance have inspired my work and will have lasting influence on my career. Dr. Laura Wangsness-Willemsen, your unfailing, authentic guidance in research grounded me throughout this research process. To all of my peers and professors: I learned so much from you the past six years. Mostly, I learned to appreciate Wednesday night classes in anticipation of your ideas, experiences, and voices.

Also, sincerest thanks to the participating school district for welcoming me in to do research during such a challenging year. Thank you, also, to the educators who so candidly shared their experiences and insights with me. You provided vivid details that personified characteristics and qualities that are so often difficult to capture. Your work and reflections are the heart of this paper, and I cannot thank you enough for so willingly sharing your time with me.

Additionally, I share my gratitude and appreciation for my extended family and dear friends. You inquired, listened, and encouraged me throughout this process. I don't yet know what life looks and feels like in the absence of this program and paper, but I do know it involves spending time with you. Thank you for your grace, laughter, and love.

Finally, I want to express appreciation and love for my husband, Jeff; the strong and steady presence throughout the past five years. Also, the cook, an editor, and the guy who answered: "Can you at least tell me if this makes sense?" more times than I care to admit. I so enjoyed the: "Yes—it's just like when…." moments of clarity. You have my most profound gratitude for your support, encouragement, wisdom and ability to hold space for me throughout this process.

To Mom & Paul:

Failing to fetch me at first, keep encouraged;
Missing me one place, search another;
I stop somewhere, waiting for you.
-Walt Whitman "Song of Myself": Verse 52

Abstract

Instructional feedback offers a critical contribution to teacher professional development aimed at improving student learning outcomes. The most influential feedback comes from principals who have developed strong collegial relationships with teachers through observation-based understanding of their instructional practices, intentional interpersonal connection, and collaboration on shared goals. In essence, collegial relationships between principals and teachers nurture the development of trust, an essential element in the process of giving and receiving feedback. Unfortunately, instructional feedback has historically been delivered through teacher evaluations, which attempt to serve two contradictory purposes: To evaluate for retention and to nurture professional development (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.; Marzano, 2012; Scholastic Inc., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009; Wise et al., 1984). These dual purposes have led to an educational dilemma in ensuring teachers receive effective feedback that serves as a catalyst for professional development.

While there are numerous reasons for the feedback dilemma, this dissertation addressed teachers' perceptions of trust and leadership, and the influence both have on receiving feedback and engaging in consequent professional development. Past literature addresses the near futility of using teacher evaluation as a basis for professional development (Reinhorn et al., 2017; Weisberg et al., 2009; Wise et al., 198;); national and state policies all indicate a need for increased formative feedback based on frequent observations by principals (Academic Improvement and Teacher Quality Programs, 2006; Danielson, 2010; NEA, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2009; Wise et al., 1984). Thus, research and policy support the need for a different approach to instructional feedback, yet both are limited in their understanding about what teachers perceive as helpful in supporting their own professional development to

advance student learning. This dissertation focused on how teachers understand leadership, trust, and feedback, and how all influence their professional development decisions.

This case study research drew on the experiences of 10 tenured, secondary teachers through semi-structured focus group interviews. All participants were drawn from a school district undergoing a practical shift in teacher evaluation and feedback cycles in order to provide more frequent, non-evaluative feedback to teachers. Participants emphasized the need for feedback from principals who knew them well as educators, powered with knowledge gained from frequent observations. They also discussed their perceptions of relevant and accessible feedback, how principals have contributed to their professional development aimed to improve student learning, and their understanding of the development of trust between teachers and principals. Based on scholarship and collected data, recommendations have been made for principals, teachers, and local policymakers who are considering more effective approaches to teacher evaluation and non-evaluative feedback. This includes the development of principal-teacher relationships built on reciprocal trust and shared responsibility for feedback cycles.

Keywords: Feedback, Trust, Transformational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Collaboration, Professional Development

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As a 23-year-old first year teacher in a school comprised of 1800 students, 100 colleagues, and four administrators, I remember being wholly overwhelmed by the prospect of facilitating learning in five classrooms full of 17-year-old students. In retrospect, I was entirely right to be overwhelmed. Thankfully, I also did not know what I did not know. Blind ignorance and the ability to build relationships with students fueled me through my first years in the classroom. A loose curriculum guide and collaborative peers provided a framework of instruction, and a maternal department chair nurtured me through teaching evaluations completed by two different administrators: One who began his career in education as a health teacher and whose kindness and interest in the lessons often resulted in encouraging, appreciative feedback, and the other who began his career as a secondary math teacher and whose feedback reflected his preference for a systematic and concrete teaching style. The latter of the two administrators often provided feedback that diverged from the emerging constructivist pedagogical belief system of this inexperienced English teacher. This does not suggest the feedback was incorrect; however, it does suggest a potentially unclear path for professional development.

In my early years of teaching, my professional development decisions were random and often inspired by colleagues. There was no well-defined link between instructional feedback and my professional development decisions. In fact, most assessments of my teaching methods fell into only two of the three feedback categories distinguished by Stone and Heen (2014): Appreciation, evaluation, and coaching. Appreciative feedback seeks to acknowledge and motivate recipients; this form of feedback came to me through students and parents, typically linked to whether or not an assignment was enjoyed or a high grade was earned. Evaluative feedback aims to rate or rank the recipient against a set of predetermined standards. Teacher

evaluation was provided by building administrators who attended my classes for one hour, three times a year in preparation for subsequent conversations about my instructional processes and progress.

Coaching feedback aims to help the recipient improve skills and expand knowledge within their field (Stone & Heen, 2014). When I did receive coaching feedback, it was through chance conversations with peers who taught the same subject. Had I received more systematic coaching feedback, there is increased likelihood I would have made more intentional professional development decisions. This claim is easy to make in hindsight and certainly not unique to me. Colleagues in the field of education express similar experiences with limited instructional feedback, which highlights a number of significant concerns in current teacher evaluation systems: What is the current process of providing teachers instructional feedback?; how do leadership qualities and the existence of trust between leaders and followers impact the reception by teachers of instructional feedback?; and how do current leadership models and feedback systems influence teacher decision-making regarding their respective professional development? I have introduced the topics of feedback, leadership, and trust and their influence on teacher professional development. In the following chapter, I provide an overview of the study and offer additional reasoning that supports the urgency and significance of the problem.

Statement of Problem and Study Purpose

While all three forms of feedback outlined by Stone and Heen (2014) are necessary for professional development, the absence of coaching feedback is not limited solely to my experiences as an educator. In 2016, the National Education Association (NEA) adopted a new policy statement that included the expectation that, "[e]valuations must be meaningful, providing all teachers with clear and actionable feedback linked to tailored professional development. Such

feedback should include regular non-evaluative formative feedback ….” (p. 21). However, persistent inconsistencies in the frequency of observations and a continued emphasis on evaluative feedback rather than the recommended practice of providing coaching feedback prompt the need for continued exploration on how leaders help facilitate teacher professional development to advance student learning.

Current educational leadership models emphasize a need for strong leader-follower relationships built on trust and the occurrence of frequent instructional feedback. Instructional feedback is integral to teacher professional development; however, research suggests that teacher evaluation functions as the main source of instructional feedback (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.; Marzano, 2012; Scholastic Inc., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009). Because evaluation systems serve to measure teachers by providing information often leading to job retention or loss, these systems do little to build trust, which can play as critical a role as feedback in teacher professional development.

Accordingly, the educational problem this dissertation addressed is the predominant utilization of evaluation as the main form of teacher feedback. If evaluation serves as the main form of teacher feedback and, as literature suggests, evaluation is inadequate at supporting teacher professional development, then this not only adversely affects teachers’ instructional practices, but it also has adverse impact on student learning. Thus, the purpose of this study was to:

1. Describe the professional development experiences of teachers from a school district in Greater Minnesota, with a focus on how feedback influences their professional development decisions.

2. Gain better understanding of the relationships between principals and teachers that foster effective systems of feedback.
3. Describe how trust between principals and teachers factors into the influence of instructional feedback and subsequent professional development decisions.
4. Finally, I describe how feedback, trust, and leadership provide a basis for professional development in order to make actionable recommendations for enhanced instructional practices aimed at advancing student learning.

This study adds to an existing knowledge base about evaluation and feedback practices, and it provides specific ideas surrounding trust, leadership, and professional development that contribute to the current conversation about the importance of effective feedback to learners of all ages.

Correlative Study Purpose: Advancing Student Achievement

The purpose of this section is to acknowledge the connection between the professional development of teachers and student learning. While the focus of this dissertation centered the influence of feedback, leadership, and trust on teacher professional development, the undercurrent of my study is advancing student achievement through the professional growth of educators. The constant subtext that exists throughout educational literature is student learning. Thus, teachers developing their instructional practices correlates to instructional efficacy in advancing student learning and understanding administrator and teacher impact on student achievement is certainly worthy of additional study. When taking into consideration this already multifaceted study, it is not pragmatic to add an additional layer of research focusing on the causal relationship between teacher professional development and student learning. However, for

the purposes of this dissertation, it is logical to acknowledge a nexus in advancing student learning through teacher professional development.

A noteworthy tie that binds teacher professional development to student learning is the collective efficacy of the instructional staff. “Collective teacher efficacy refers to educators’ shared beliefs that through their combined efforts they can positively influence student outcomes…” (Donohoo, 2018, p. 324). Additionally, critical to the purpose of this dissertation, was the notion that research suggests collective efficacy among a teaching staff leads to improved student learning (Donohoo, 2018). As I explored the topics of feedback, leadership, trust, and teacher professional development throughout this study, I inherently addressed factors that must exist for teachers to believe in their collective efficacy with the ultimate goal of advancing student learning.

Previous studies have emphasized prevalent themes that also appear in my study surrounding teacher collective efficacy. Foremost, in schools with a culture of collective efficacy, so too exist high expectations of students, deeper implementation of school improvement ideas, and positive attitudes about teacher professional development (Donohoo, 2018). Additionally, Ciani et al. (2008) found collective efficacy has a negative relationship in schools that place a high value on teacher performance goals. Namely, schools that focus more on teacher evaluation systems experience reduced teacher collective efficacy. Finally, in schools where a performance goal orientation was valued, teachers’ motivational beliefs were less adaptive and teachers experienced less of a sense of community within the school (Ciani et al., 2008). Community, as described by Ciani et al. (2008), is inclusive of trust, encouragement, collaboration, and administrative support. These findings underscore the following central themes explored in this paper: The ineffectiveness of teacher evaluation systems in regard to

teacher professional development, the necessity of trust between principals and teachers, and the critical process of collaboration between and among principals and teachers.

While I will not address research on collective efficacy in Chapter 2, critical to my work is a fundamental understanding of how collaboration and trust between principals and teachers and non-evaluative feedback from leaders contribute to a culture of collective efficacy.

> School leaders play a key role in creating non-threatening, evidence-based instructional environments. By promoting a culture of collaboration focused on "knowing thy collective impact," leaders have the potential to support school improvement in ways that positively influence teachers' collective efficacy beliefs and thus promote student achievement. (Donohoo et al., 2018, p. 43)

Further, fundamental to my findings was an awareness of how a culture of collective efficacy contributes to a united interest in advancing student learning through cooperative professional development efforts.

Paradigm Framing the Study and Research Questions

In seeking out a socially constructed meaning of the feedback practices within this Greater Minnesota site, I engaged in interpretivist research seeking to discover shared meaning surrounding feedback, trust, and professional development. To address the goals of this study, I gathered data through a qualitative case study within the secondary site of a school district in Greater Minnesota. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined case study research as, "… a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) … over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (p. 96). By exploring the experiences of multiple individuals within the bounds of this school district, I studied in-progress occurrences of teachers engaging in evaluation systems and

acquiring instructional feedback. Choosing to center on one district allowed the ability to focus on the issues of teacher evaluation, instructional feedback, and leader-follower relationships at these secondary schools.

Data were collected through semi-structured, open-ended, focus-group interviews with multiple tenured, secondary teachers who have engaged in evaluation cycles with their principals. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling, which resulted in critical case sampling, thus providing detailed information about a specific issue and logical generalizations across cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews advance the multiple themes involved in the issue of instructional feedback and its connection to teacher professional development. These themes include within-site understanding of the role of teacher evaluation, the effectiveness of teacher evaluation as an approach to instructional feedback, the impact of instructional feedback on professional development decisions that seek to advance student learning, and the leader-follower relationships and the correlated role of trust. These interviews provide an in-depth understanding of the themes of instructional feedback, participant professional development decisions, and leader-follower relationships at this site.

To guide this study, my work was framed by the following primary and secondary research questions:

I. What are the lived experiences of tenured, secondary level Clifton School District[1] teachers receiving instructional feedback from their building leaders?
    A. What types of feedback do tenured, secondary level Clifton teachers perceive as effective in shaping their professional development experiences and advancing student achievement?

[1] Clifton School District is a pseudonym. The district name and names of participants have been changed to maintain anonymity.

B. Why do tenured, secondary level Clifton teachers accept and act on feedback from leaders?

II. How do tenured, secondary level Clifton teachers understand the experience of teacher evaluation and its influence on their professional development decisions when seeking to enhance their instruction?

III. What impact does trust between principals and teachers have on professional development decisions for tenured, secondary level Clifton teachers?

A. How do tenured, secondary level teachers define qualities of trust between leaders and followers?

B. Why do tenured, secondary level teachers choose to trust their leaders?

C. What is the impact of Covid-19 on trust in relationships between leaders and followers?

Overview of the Specific Research Site & Context

The selection of this research site took into consideration a number of logistical and academic factors. This school district in Greater Minnesota consists of one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school. Explained more thoroughly within the limitations section, I focused my data collection on the middle and high schools. The size of this school district allowed for relatability among participant experiences, as each school has only one administrator, limiting the number of administrative styles and approaches to instructional feedback.

This district also follows Minnesota Department of Education policies and guidelines around teacher evaluation and professional development. Further, this school district has taken intentional action in the past two school years to build a teacher evaluation system that

incorporates more informal feedback cycles between administrators and teachers. This evaluation system has included brief, formative observations and follow-up conversations, administrator and teacher co-planning and co-teaching cycles, and teacher goal setting conferences. The size and location of this district, as well as the intentional work to create an evaluation system that includes both formative and summative feedback cycles for teachers, made this site an ideal location to engage in data collection and analysis relevant to my topic of study.

Brief Overview of Previous Research and Significance of the Study

In my 19 years as a secondary educator, I have experienced the leadership styles of five principals and nine assistant principals. These individuals have had a lasting impact on my professional development. Principals' direct feedback through evaluations and indirect feedback through chance encounters molded my self-perception as a teacher and influenced my daily classroom decisions. My experience provides just one perspective among hundreds of teachers within my respective school district. While my professional development may be unique to my career path, research and experience have identified common trends worthy of better understanding in order to improve upon current systems.

Although change was sought in the creation of policies within programs like No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2002) and Race to the Top (Race to the Top Act, 2011), research suggests it is more challenging to define a clear connection between administrative leadership and teacher professional development. While literature provides robust empirical support for principals to engage in instructional leadership (Goodwin & Babo, 2014; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013; Robinson et al., 2008), focusing on instructional practices and teacher professional development continues to be a challenge for many administrators (Bush & Glover, 2003; Hallinger & Murphy,

2013). John Hattie (2015) reasoned instructional leadership keeps the end goal of student learning in mind by centering teacher impact on student learning through observations, feedback, and professional development that enhances student learning. Further, Hattie (2015) suggested a principal's most significant daily tasks are evaluating the impact every employee has on student learning and creating a climate where administrators, teachers, and students are continuously learning.

Just as we measure student learning and progress through achievement data such as grades and standardized tests, administrators attempt to measure teacher effectiveness through observations and evaluations. Yet, teachers largely report evaluative feedback is not helpful in identifying specific areas of improvement or providing opportunities for professional development (Hill & Grossman, 2013). Nonetheless, research continues to support a need for leadership that provides teachers with specific pedagogical feedback. Influential leadership is more plausible if, "… leadership practices create conditions for enhanced teaching and learning" (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 666). Specifically, Robinson et al. (2008) identified five dimensions of leadership that emerged from their meta-analysis as most effective in improving student learning by creating conditions for teaching and learning. All five of these dimensions directly reflect the impact of building leaders on teachers' instructional practices. These five dimensions are:

1. Establishing goals and expectations.
2. Resourcing strategically.
3. Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum.
4. Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development.
5. Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment. (Robinson et al., 2008)

As research and policy support the need for principals to act as facilitators in developing instructional capacity in their schools, literature also suggests simply engaging in more effective leadership strategies or enacting new instructional feedback policies are not enough to change the professional learning climate. “The literature on high-performing organizations shows that they are normally characterized by high trust and leaders who develop, nurture, and model trusting and authentic relationships” (Leithwood et al., 2013, p. 263). Thus, tenets of both transformational and instructional leadership models bear influence on the utility of leaders engaging with teachers about the practice of instruction. In fact, trust plays a critical role in leader-follower relationships. Transformational and instructional leadership are described in the upcoming section in this chapter. Additionally, Chapter 2 more intricately describes transformational and instructional leadership, as well as the ways in which trust can be developed between principals and teachers.

The continuously evolving role of teachers in the United States (US) education system requires a comprehensive awareness of pedagogical, social, emotional, and cultural best practices. As an educator, it is often unclear how one should go about engaging in the inexhaustible field of professional development. School districts may provide support in established district initiatives, schools may provide support on building initiatives, and individuals may seek growth opportunities through local, state, and national conferences. There are limitless opportunities for professional development; however, what role do principals play in initiating and advancing collective professional development in their teaching staff? Literature indicates teachers look to principals as sources of guidance in their individual professional development.

Within the research that forms the foundation of this study emerges three interrelated elements that impact teacher professional development. Although research paints a landscape of educational leadership, feedback, and trust, the data collected through interviews highlight a more elaborate image of the potential impact of instructional feedback, with leader-follower relationships acting as a conduit to actionable professional development systems.

Definition of Terms

Feedback

Drawing on the work of Stone & Heen (2014), for the purposes of this dissertation, I used feedback theory to distinguish between three different forms of feedback: Appreciation feedback, coaching feedback, and evaluation feedback. While all three forms of feedback are necessary for professional development, it is important to understand the role each plays in the workplace and how effective feedback can be if both the individual providing the feedback and the individual receiving the feedback understand the intent and purpose of each form. I draw on Stone and Heen's (2014) distinction of three forms of feedback: Evaluative, appreciative, and coaching and apply these three forms to the field of education.

Appreciation Feedback

Appreciation feedback is "fundamentally about relationship and human connection" (Stone & Heen, 2014, p. 30). This type of feedback ensures people feel their work and efforts are noticed and appreciated by their leaders. The relational context of this feedback is significant, as it requires leaders to have sustained insight into the strengths and experiences of all members of the organization. For this reason, appreciation feedback pertains closely to the overall climate of the organization. Teachers receive appreciative feedback most often from students and parents.

Coaching Feedback

Coaching feedback is aimed at helping people "learn, grow, or change" (Stone & Heen, 2014, p. 32). Coaching feedback aligns with instructional leadership, as teachers are provided professional development experiences that aim to evolve their instructional practices. Teacher perception of coaching feedback hinges on how effective the leader is at providing timely feedback relevant to the instructional practice and content area. Teachers most often receive coaching feedback from their peers and, in some cases, from their building administrators.

Evaluative Feedback

Evaluation feedback provides the recipient an idea about where they stand in relationship to an established set of standards (Stone & Heen, 2014). In education, evaluation feedback comes in the form of teacher evaluation systems. Existing literature suggests evaluative feedback functions as the main source of instructional feedback (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.; Marzano, 2012; Scholastic Inc., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009). Stone & Heen (2014) established there is an element of evaluation in all three forms of feedback. Teachers receive evaluative feedback in the form of teacher evaluations conducted by their building administrators.

Leadership

Leadership is the action of an individual influencing a group of individuals to achieve common goals or desired outcomes (Bush & Glover, 2003; Leithwood, 2005; Northouse, 2016). Northouse (2016) described leadership as a process that depends equally on the leader, or those who engage in leading, and the follower, or "those toward whom the leadership is directed" (p. 7). Defining leadership as a process suggests leaders both influence and are influenced by the followers (Northouse, 2016).

Instructional Leadership

Hallinger and Murphy (2013) defined instructional leadership as "an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teaching and learning" (p. 7). The ability to motivate staff acts as a nexus between instructional leadership and transformational leadership; instructional leadership focuses more on the professional development of followers while transformational leadership centers on moral development and decision-making.

Transformational Leadership

James MacGregor Burns (1978) is credited with first attempting to link the roles of leaders and followers. In doing so, he recognized transformational leaders engage with followers, resulting in a connection that often increases motivation and morality in both the followers and leaders (Burns, 1978). Subsequent research regarding transformational leadership addresses the concern that such development of followers requires leaders to possess sound moral values; otherwise, transformational leadership can become self-serving for leaders who lack concern for followers and their individual or collective professional development. Transformational leaders are able to motivate followers through this modeling of high standards of values and moral behaviors, investing in and supporting follower individual growth, and stressing the shared benefit to both leader and follower in realizing the organizational vision (Northouse, 2016).

Professional Development

Effective professional development is defined as: Strategic learning that results in changes in teachers' instruction and improvements in student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017): Effective professional development incorporates the following elements: 1.) Is content-focused, 2.) Incorporates active

learning, 3.) Supports collaboration, 4.) Uses models of effective practice, 5.) Provides coaching and expert support, 5.) Offers feedback and reflection, and 6.) Is of sustained duration. Numerous elements of effective professional development align with literature highlighted in this study; specifically, the provision of coaching and feedback is emphasized in supporting teacher professional development.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is not a central focus of this dissertation, but a general understanding of the term is necessary in order to situate my work among the role of instructional leadership and its impact on teacher professional development. “Teachers' self-efficacy can be defined as their belief and trust in themselves, and their expectations of their students’ learning as a result of their teachings” (Ozdemir et al., 2020, p. 27). Specifically, self-efficacy impacts both administrator and teacher behaviors, as this study focused on how leaders and followers choose to engage with feedback and professional development, self-efficacy exists in concert with the main tenets of this paper.

Trust

For the purposes of this dissertation, the definition of trust shaped by Feltman (2009) seemed most appropriate, as it emphasizes that followers must choose to trust the actions of their leaders. Defining trust as, “Choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to the actions of another” (Feltman, 2009, p. 7), underscores the intentional choice made by someone to trust another. Feltman’s (2009) work aligns with Solomon’s (2014) understanding of the role choice plays in the action of trust. “Thus it is those who would follow, not those who would lead, who have the ultimate power in any leadership relationship because they are the ones who can decide to give trust” (Solomon, 2014, p. 122).

Feltman (2009) provided four characteristics individuals must possess to be viewed as trustworthy by others: sincerity, reliability, competence, and care. Handford and Leithwood (2012) agreed with Feltman (2009) about competence and reliability as characteristics of trustworthy leaders, but they also included consistency, openness, respect, and integrity to their list of essential trustworthy traits. There are clear intersections between Feltman's (2009) assessments, Handford and Leithwood's (2012) characteristics of trustworthy leaders, and Tschannen-Moran's (2013) five facets of trust: honesty, openness, reliability, competence, and benevolence.

Brené Brown (2018), a qualitative researcher studying shame, empathy, and vulnerability, used Feltman's (2009) definition of trust within her own work, and she further expanded upon these characteristics by distinguishing seven behaviors that determine trustworthiness: "boundaries, reliability, accountability, vault[1], integrity, nonjudgment, and generosity" (pp. 225–226). Thus, it is worth noting, while researchers identify parallel requisite traits associated with building trust-filled relationships, a foundational definition of trust provided by Feltman (2009) continues to evolve in complexity in union with the ongoing research surrounding trust.

Study Limitations

Leadership Models

I focused my leadership research on only two leadership models: Transformational leadership and instructional leadership. Although many leadership models exist in the field of education, I limited my research to these two models because of my focus on teacher professional development of their instructional practices and because transformational leadership is the model most cited as ideal by the leaders within my current school district. Further, I

observed during my initial research on educational leadership that literature on these two models seemed most pervasive. This is an observation supported by Philip Hallinger (2003), who acknowledged that numerous leadership models have been emphasized in the field of education; however, he argued, “two major approaches have predominated: instructional leadership and transformational leadership” (p. 330).

Secondary Focus

Due to the complexities of leading teachers, this study placed emphasis on leadership qualities of secondary principals. This limitation exists in order to narrow the teacher and administrator experiential focus, as instructional leadership requires different skills at the elementary and secondary levels. For example, one particular responsibility referred to in cited research is the need for secondary administrators to have advanced understanding of complex subject matter in a broad variety of classes and grade levels. Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (2011) recognized the differences in elementary and secondary administrative qualities through their findings surrounding teacher expectations of instructional leadership. While both elementary and secondary teachers agree leaders should nurture a culture of professional development and an emphasis on high student achievement, teachers disagree on what this looks like at the two levels (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011). Elementary teachers expected a more hands-on role in instruction from their building leaders; whereas, secondary teachers cited a need for more frequent feedback on their instructional practices (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011). I chose to limit my research and data collection to focus on education for grades 6 through 12 because of the broad differences in administrative expectations of elementary and secondary level teachers.

Global Pandemic: Impact on Research of Covid-19

On March 13, 2020, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz issued Executive Order 20-01 declaring a peacetime emergency requiring the move to distance learning for all educational institutions in the state of Minnesota (Exec. Order No. 20-01, 2020). This shift to online learning was enacted in response to the emergent threat of impact of Covid-19, a global pandemic, on the state of Minnesota. On July 30, 2020, Governor Tim Walz released Emergency Executive Order 20-82, which outlined the process through which schools would reopen in Minnesota for the 2020-2021 school year. In Executive Order 20-82, Walz (2020) stated:

> While reopening school buildings for in-person instruction is our ultimate goal, and we recognize that many children and families have experienced additional economic hardships, social isolation, and other stressors through distance learning, the main priority must continue to be the health, safety, and wellness of our students, staff, and community. (Exec. Order 20-82, 2020)

The stressors involving the health, safety, and instructional experiences Walz (2020) cited in this announcement directly and indirectly influenced the work surrounding this dissertation. Direct influence included the disruption of my responsibilities for the professional development of colleagues, as my professional expectations immediately shifted to facilitating and supporting online instructional development of peers in an area of technological expertise new to all of us. The commitment to my own professional learning in pursuance of supporting the learning of my colleagues infringed upon my ability to observe my intended writing timeline.

The implications of the indirect impact on this paper were more expansive. Within an interpretivist paradigm, the socially constructed nature of the experiences of participants in my study may be forever impacted by this pandemic. The epistemological positioning of interpretivist research places emphasis on the personal perspectives of research participants.

Therefore, the unique experiences of participants throughout a global pandemic can bear significant influence on their expressed beliefs and experiences in relationship to the impact of leadership, the flow of feedback, and their overall ability to trust their leaders both in instances of leading through a new way of instruction, and indirectly, through the impact of their leaders on respective and collective professional development. The emergence and continuing impact of this global pandemic will undoubtedly influence the personal experiences of the research participants in ways that may be difficult to understand while still in the middle of the pandemic.

Trust between leaders and followers are impacted by the mitigation strategies and approaches to instructional leadership utilized by building and district administrators throughout the pandemic. As a recognized limitation of this study, research suggests trust weighs heavily on the decisions of teachers to actively participate in professional development. Also, there exists a prescient need for teachers to work collaboratively toward solutions for critical challenges that emerge throughout the time of the pandemic. Focusing on collective improvement may also prove more relative to the pandemic than to the qualities of those in leadership positions outside of this emergent state of operating. Separating the pandemic experience from pre-pandemic or post-pandemic environments may prove challenging for both teachers and this researcher.

Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I provided a foundation for this study by introducing the research topic of the impact of feedback on teacher professional development decisions. Further, I presented the existence of trust as integral to leader-follower relationships while describing the significance of trust in teacher professional development. In Chapter 1, I also provided an overview of the proposed methodology for a qualitative study seeking to understand the lived experiences of

teachers receiving instructional feedback from their leaders. Additionally, the study revealed the effect trust has on leader-follower relationships and how the presence or absence of trust in these relationships influences teacher professional development decisions.

In order to deconstruct the influential factors that foster professional development, Chapter 2 provides a more comprehensive understanding of past and present systems of instructional feedback. Furthermore, Chapter 2 provides a detailed summary of the evolution of national, state, and local policies on systems of feedback for teachers. Finally, Chapter 2 portrays the current disparities in the frequency and perceived utility of administrative feedback. Research suggests these disparities can be due to beliefs about the role of administrators in providing coaching feedback on instruction, complexities in relationships between leaders and followers, and to what degree administrators utilize influential instructional leadership strategies. Further, research indicates disconnect between coaching feedback on instruction and the value teachers place on this feedback to inform their professional development decisions.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to describe research conducted around teacher professional development, including leadership factors that can nurture, facilitate, or weaken teacher engagement in their professional learning. The review of literature identified abundant literature discussing the effectiveness of teacher evaluation systems and the implementation of educational leadership theory, including the importance of trust between leaders and followers as a critical catalyst for professional development. In contrast, the reviewed literature reveals limited scholarship addressing the intersection of feedback, leadership, and the development of trust in leader-follower relationships. This literature review discusses the implementation of feedback, leadership, and trust in educational settings and how researchers recognize teacher professional development has the potential to exist at their intersection. Therefore, this review of literature focuses on the aforementioned bodies of literature: the past and present roles of instructional feedback to teachers, the influence of transformational and instructional leadership models on teacher professional development, and how trust bears influence on the impact of systems of feedback and leadership models in education.

Past and Present Systems of Instructional Feedback

The following section examines the past and present systems of instructional feedback, including exploring what research says about the impact of feedback on instruction and the role evaluative feedback plays in teacher professional development. Throughout the past century, United States school administrators have included in their responsibilities the evaluation of teachers. These teacher evaluations have shown limited effect on teachers or students (Reinhorn et al., 2017).

The History of Teacher Evaluation

This section identifies individuals, approaches, and policies influencing current practices of teacher evaluation and instructional feedback for teachers.

The Early 20th Century

Democracy and Science. In Marzano et al.'s 2011 study, the authors observed the years immediately following World War II supported a shift in teacher supervision and evaluation that continues to impact current teacher evaluation systems. Prior to the mid-1950s, two competing views of education dominated the field. The origin of these views are credited to John Dewey and Frederick Taylor (Marzano et al., 2011). Dewey believed democracy provided the infrastructure for human progress; he posited schools should educate students based on ideals of citizenship. Dewey's ideas included connecting learning to real world application, differentiating instruction to meet the needs of individual learners, and encouraging students to be more active in their learning (Marzano et al., 2011). Frederick Taylor believed within science existed the fundamental framework for schools. The industrial revolution provided the foundation for Taylor's beliefs, as the use of data to measure the productivity of assembly line workers led to more efficient practices. Ellwood Cubberley and William Wetzel built upon Taylor's views by emphasizing the need for data to measure student learning as a main indicator of teacher effectiveness (Marzano et al., 2011). The use of student achievement data (standardized tests), coupled with clear learning goals and the use of aptitude tests to measure student ability, though developed by Cubberley and Wetzel, can be credited to Taylor's scientific views of education (Marzano et al., 2011).

Post-World War II

Emergence of Early Teacher Evaluation. Marzano et al. (2011), identified philosophical shifts in the mid-1950s that began recognizing teachers as individuals who benefit from both professional and emotional support. During the mid-1950s, strong emphasis was placed on the value of teacher observations to measure effective teaching. Matthew Whitehead is credited with promoting the need for supervisors to engage in purposeful teacher observations in a manner that inspired the clinical observation methods of the 1960s and 1970s (Marzano et al., 2011). Clinical observations have served as the foundation for teacher evaluation systems since the early 1960s. "Few models in the entire field of education—let alone in the specific domain of educational supervision—have been as widely deployed, as widely disparaged, or as widely misunderstood" (Marzano et al., 2011, p. 17). Based on work led by Professor Morris Cogan in the Harvard Master of Arts in Teaching program, clinical observation cycles were modeled after supervisory practices in the medical field. Cogan's student, Robert Goldhammer (1969), first published about clinical observation cycles in the book, *Clinical Supervision: Special Methods for the Supervision of Teachers*. Goldhammer (1969) explained a five-phase process:

1.) Pre-observation conference

2.) Classroom observation

3.) Analysis

4.) Supervision conference

5.) Analysis of the Analysis (Goldhammer, 1969).

Cogan (1973) built on the process outlined by Goldhammer (1969) by emphasizing the importance of clinical supervision as vital to the professional development process of teachers, noting teachers should not be treated as though they are in training, rather that they are, "…

continuously engaged in improving [their] practice, as is required of all professionals" (Cogan, 1973, p. 21). Clinical observations should incorporate feedback offered by supervisors in order to engage in collegial, inquiry-driven conversations with teachers developing their craft (Cogan, 1973; Goldhammer, 1969). However, when absent of rich dialogue, the process of clinical observations became a checklist of sorts to quickly evaluate teachers (Marzano et al., 2011).

Teacher Evaluation and Feedback: 1980s

Madeline Hunter (1980) contributed to the role of teacher supervision through her research on supervisory conversations. Hunter's (1980) exploration of instructional conferences most specifically contributes to the focus of this literature review, as she addressed the need for supervisors to be well-versed on sound instructional practices and able to communicate effectively with teachers during the post-observation conference. Further, Hunter (1980) explained the importance of evaluative conferences functioning as a, "… summation of what has occurred in and resulted from a series of instructional conferences" (p. 412). When the evaluative conference occurs at the end of the year, after supervisors have engaged in frequent instructional observations and conferences with teachers, the content of the evaluation conference should not be surprising or unfair to the teacher (Hunter, 1980). "This conference is a culmination of a year's diagnostic, prescriptive, collaborative work with a teacher and supervisor who shared responsibility for the teacher's continuous growth" (Hunter, 1980, p. 412). The emphasis on frequent instructional conferences and collaboration between supervisors and teachers before the teacher evaluation recognizes evaluation is not the heart of teacher professional development, rather the evaluation should communicate the results of teacher professional development. Influenced by Hunter, the 1980s continued to see a shift away from what had evolved into

prescriptive clinical observations and toward a deeper investigation into the actual effectiveness of teacher evaluation practices (Marzano et al., 2011).

In the mid-1980s, a national study completed by the Research and Development Organization (RAND) sought to determine what types of teacher evaluation were essentially occurring throughout the United States (Wise et al., 1984). The report, Teacher Evaluation: A Study of Effective Practices, identified, "Teacher evaluation may serve four basic purposes: Individual staff development, school improvement, individual personnel decisions, and school status decisions. The first two purposes involve improvement; the second two, accountability" (Wise et al., 1984, p. 5). Wise et al. (1984) found when considering instructional improvement, evaluative feedback must be specific, descriptive, and provide clear direction for professional development. In contrast, when organizational accountability is the intended outcome, the evaluation process must yield more standard, objective, and externally justifiable information about teacher performance (Wise et al., 1984). As indicated by the research conducted by Wise et al. (1984), evaluative tools are expected to fulfill often contradictory roles within a school district: improvement and accountability.

Teacher Evaluation & Feedback: The1990s

Marzano et al. (2011) asserted, "The Danielson model must be the reference point for any new proposals regarding supervision and evaluation" (p. 23). In 1996, Charlotte Danielson published a framework model for teaching that covered four domains: Planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities (Danielson, 2007). Like Hunter (1980), Danielson also studied the process and impact of teacher evaluation. Danielson (2010), concluded there are two reasons why educators engage in teacher evaluation: to ensure teacher quality and to promote professional development. Danielson's (2010) beliefs align with

the findings of the RAND report in that teacher evaluation is intended to hold schools accountable for student learning and to improve instruction. Wise et al. (1984) and Danielson (2010) agreed on the need for evaluators to be highly qualified in assessing instruction, in providing specific, meaningful feedback, and in devoting adequate time to engage with teachers in professional conversations (Danielson, 2010; Wise et al., 1984).

Early 21st Century: Criticism of Teacher Evaluation

Urgency surrounding the need for improved teacher evaluation systems was inspired, in part, by findings in a study called the "Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness" (Weisberg et al., 2009). Weisberg and colleagues (2009) conducted a survey of 12 school districts in four states, communicating with more than 15,000 teachers to better understand the impact of teacher evaluation systems. Their comprehensive findings indicated three-quarters of the teachers surveyed felt their evaluation results did not provide suggestions for instructional improvement. Half of the teachers who were provided suggestions for improvement did not receive any additional support or feedback for their growth (Weisberg, et al., 2009). Acting as a "call to action," this study aims to, "… examine our pervasive and longstanding failure to recognize and respond to variations in the effectiveness of our teachers" (Weisberg et al., 2009, p. 4). Thus, the "widget effect" is, in essence, failing to discern the difference in teacher effectiveness from one teacher to another (Weisberg et al., 2009).

Treating all teachers as essentially the same shows a lack of awareness by administrators in daily classroom experiences of teachers and students, and it is the result of weak relationships between administrators and teachers (Weisberg et al., 2009). Weisberg et al. (2009) informed a need later addressed by the National Education Association (NEA) in their 2011 policy that

required more meaningful teacher evaluations tailored to specific teacher needs through regular, non-evaluative feedback. Such feedback should provide insights to inform practice and lead to actionable professional development (Policy Statement Teacher Evaluation, 2011, Section C).

National Policies Addressing Teacher Evaluation

The section that follows provides an overview of the national policies that have impacted teacher evaluation systems over the past 50 years. According to the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), high-quality professional development includes, but is not limited to, activities that:

1. Improve and increase teachers' knowledge of academic subjects and enable teachers to become highly qualified;
2. Are an integral part of broad school-wide and districtwide educational improvement plans;
3. Give teachers and principals the knowledge and skills to help students meet challenging State academic standards;
4. Improve classroom management skills;
5. Are sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused and are not one-day or short-term workshops;
6. Advance teacher understanding of effective instruction strategies that are based on scientifically based research; and
7. Are developed with extensive participation of teachers, principals, parents, and administrators. (Academic Improvement and Teacher Quality Programs, 2006, p. 1)

In 2002, "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) functioned as a renewal of ESEA. NCLB became foundational to current education policy. Drawing on ESEA guidance, NCLB also

recommended supervisors regularly evaluate teachers in relationship with their professional development programs to measure impact on student achievement (Academic Improvement and Teacher Quality Programs, 2006). While the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) supersedes the ESEA and NCLB, there is recognition that professional development activities provide necessary guidance for states and school districts when considering professional development for their teachers.

In 2009, federal education officials tied teacher evaluation to student achievement and school improvement through the "Race to the Top" program. As a result, 46 states enacted new teacher evaluation policies (Reinhorn et al., 2017). Race to the Top addressed reforms to teacher and principal leadership, focusing on conducting evaluations with frequent feedback and coaching support, all of which inform professional development decisions (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). These policies reflect current research on teacher evaluation by emphasizing a need for frequent, formative observation and feedback cycles, yet much of the literature recognizes that reforms fail to thoroughly define what is meant by "frequent" observations. Typically, ranging from once a year to once every three years, observation cycles for tenured teachers are inconsistent from district to district and have varying impact on professional development (American Institutes for Research, 2009; Weisberg et al., 2009; Wise et al., 1984).

In 2011, the National Education Association (NEA) adopted a new policy statement that included the expectation that evaluation systems provide, "… ongoing, non-evaluative, formative feedback and regular, comprehensive, meaningful and fair evaluations" (Policy Statement Teacher Evaluation, 2011). However, the frequency of observation and feedback cycles were interpreted differently by school districts throughout the country (American Institutes for Research, 2009; Weisberg et al., 2009; Wise et al., 1984).

The suggestions set forth by the NEA indicate educational leaders cannot simplify the process of teacher evaluation to be a one-size-fits-all endeavor. In order to tailor teacher evaluation to individual teachers, administrators need to understand subject-area content and best practices. Further, professional development should be specific to individual teacher needs, and teacher input needs to be continuous in order to provide a sustained impact on practice (Hill & Grossman, 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009). In this manner, there is a need for "coaching," which suggests a model of teacher development supported by instructional practice and feedback provided by leaders well-versed in teaching and learning (Stone & Heen, 2014). Research suggests administrators need to shift away from infrequent evaluation systems and toward systems of frequent feedback guided by instructional leadership (Hill & Grossman, 2013; Hunter, 1980; NEA, 2011).

> Weisberg et al. (2009) described the theoretical role of teacher evaluation systems:
>
> In theory, an evaluation system should identify and measure individual teachers' strengths and weaknesses accurately and consistently, so that teachers get the feedback they need to improve their practice and so that schools can determine how best to allocate resources and provide support. (p. 10)

The theoretical shift in how administrators support teacher professional development rarely meets opposition in existing literature; however, the actual practice of providing more frequent coaching feedback to teachers is met with complex challenges. Current systems of teacher evaluation rarely provide feedback to help teachers improve, evaluation tools do not necessarily distinguish strong teaching practices, administrators struggle to find the time to complete current evaluation requirements and often lack content expertise for the feedback to be meaningful to

teachers (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.; Darling-Hammond, 2014; Scholastic Inc., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009; Wise et al., 1984).

Evaluation as the Source of Feedback

Wise et al. (1984), Danielson (2010), and Marzano (2012) emphasized the purpose of evaluation has evolved from being a managerial step to an attempt to serve the purposes of both accountability and teacher development. Danielson (2010), Weisberg et al. (2009), and Hunter (1980) offered the following solutions to improving the implementation of teacher evaluation systems:

- Implementing comprehensive evaluation systems.
- Training supervisors on the teacher evaluation system.
- Holding supervisors accountable for accurately using the evaluation system.
- Using the evaluation system in alignment with teaching assignments, professional development, hiring, and dismissal.
- Overhauling approaches to teacher dismissal.

However, these solutions do more to improve the measuring standards within teacher evaluation systems rather than focusing on how to optimize teacher professional development as a result of teacher evaluations. Marzano (2012) drew on the distinction between these two roles when suggesting, “measuring teachers and developing teachers are different purposes with different implications” (p. 15).

Wise et al. (1984) addressed the impact of evaluation on teacher behavior, identifying the need for enlisting teacher cooperation as integral in motivating teachers to engage with evaluative feedback. The two conditions identified as necessary in enlisting teachers are: 1) Teacher belief that the instructional feedback and guidance is accurate and 2) teacher sense of

empowerment that the course of action is plausible and worthwhile (Wise et al., 1984). While these two conditions speak to the need for a shared vision, purpose, and trust, Weisberg et al. (2009), found, even with the existence of these conditions, teachers may not choose to enlist in professional development because their predominant experiences with evaluation has historically been one of evaluative measurement. Teachers so rarely receive feedback suggesting a need for improvement that when supervisors do provide diagnostic feedback, teachers tend to perceive it as unfounded, uninformed, or as a personal attack (Weisberg et al., 2009). Because of the intended purposes of evaluation systems as both sources of teacher improvement and accountability (Wise et al., 1984), teachers are less likely to accept evaluative feedback as informative to their professional development (Weisberg et al., 2009).

Existing literature does not suggest the elimination of evaluative feedback; more so, it recognizes the complexity of evaluation and teacher professional development within our current systems. In many cases, evaluation systems provide the only form of feedback to teachers (Weisberg et al., 2009). The more effective the evaluation processes used by a district, the more useful the feedback to teachers when guiding professional development decisions. Feedback plays a significant role in teacher decisions about their professional development. When supervisors are unable to provide valuable instructional feedback, teachers are "denied both the knowledge and opportunity to improve" (Weisberg et al., 2009, p. 14).

"[Teachers] crave useful feedback and the challenge and counsel that would enable them to improve. Far from ducking the issue of evaluation, they want more robust systems that are useful, fair, and pointed at productive development" (Darling-Hammond, 2014, p. 5). Stone and Heen (2014) explained feedback speaks to the innate desire to continuously learn, but it is also a source of internal conflict in recipients. "In addition to our desire to learn and improve, we

long for something else that is fundamental: to be loved, accepted, and respected just as we are. And the very fact of feedback suggests that how we are is not quite okay" (Stone & Heen, 2014, p. 8). The potential for internal conflict emphasizes the need for strong leader-follower relationships.

Feedback as a Basis for Professional development

Khachatryan (2015) highlighted an outcome of effective teacher feedback systems as one that fosters organizational progression. Namely, he recognized the impact a leader has on their building through, "… advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional development …." (Khachatryan, 2015, p. 166). Cherasaro et al. (2016) conducted a study to determine key factors, according to teachers, in observation and feedback cycles. Their survey results highlighted two characteristics of effective instructional feedback: the credibility of the evaluator and the accuracy of the feedback (Cherasaro et al., 2016). Both of these qualities speak to the need for administrators to have subject area knowledge and awareness of research-based instructional practices.

Fink and Markholdt (2013) described the necessity of subject area and instructional expertise as the ability of administrators to understand quality instruction and have enough pedagogical expertise to, "guide, support, nourish, [and] nurture teachers in their own improvement effort" (p. 329). The ability of principals to engage in instructional leadership is contingent upon their ability to build strong interpersonal relationships with teachers and their understanding of teaching and improving instructional practices. Administrators should consider,

> … ways to ensure that feedback is frequent, is timely, and includes specific suggestions to improve content and subject knowledge, instructional strategies, classroom

> management strategies, and recommendations for finding resources or professional development opportunities. (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016, p. 11)

Thus, though complex, literature suggests feedback is highly necessary in order to inform teacher professional development. This section provided research on the evolution of teacher evaluation systems and how feedback is integral to teacher professional development. The next section focuses on how leaders engaging in two commonly accepted leadership models can function as the instrument for communicating the need for and support of teacher professional development.

Educational Leadership

The following section demonstrates the historical evolution of the role of the school leader. As the field of education has and continues to evolve, so too has the role of school leaders. In his article reviewing conceptual and empirical development of two leadership models, Philip Hallinger (2003) acknowledged numerous leadership models have been emphasized in the field of education; however, he argued "two major approaches have predominated: instructional leadership and transformational leadership" (p. 330).

The Evolution of Transformational and Instructional Leadership Models

Hallinger (1992) contended instructional leadership emerged in response to the more managerial models of leadership of the 1960s and 1970s, and this leadership style gained acceptance in the field of education in the 1980s. Hallinger (1992) credited education researcher Ronald Edmonds (1978) with identifying, in his extensive literature studies, the need for principals to be more involved in the instructional programs and student achievement outcomes of their schools. School districts throughout the country embraced the idea put forward by Edmonds (1978) that in order for schools to improve, principals need to be instructional leaders. Even though models of instructional leadership gained traction in the 1980s, the

complexity involved in the evolution of administrative roles did not firmly take hold before another model of leadership began to gain popularity in fields of business and education (Hallinger, 1992).

Transformational leadership began to take shape around the same time instructional leadership was taking root in the field of education (Hallinger, 1992). James MacGregor Burns' (1978) research on leadership sought to identify the foundational tenets of transformational leadership. In his writing, Burns (1978) took care to distinguish the difference between power and leadership and, in doing so, established the importance of the role followers play in the success of leaders to achieve their goals. According to Burns (1978), "… leadership is relational, collective, and purposeful. Leadership shares with power the central function of achieving purpose …. [However,] Leaders do not obliterate followers' motives though they may arouse certain motives and ignore others" (p. 18).

The distinction between power and leadership establishes the fault lines between managerial leadership, wherein managers often wield power over followers, and transformational leadership, wherein leaders seek to align the values and motivations of their followers with their own motivations in order to realize mutual success. "Leadership … is thus inseparable from followers' needs and goals. The essence of the leader-follower relationship is the interaction of persons with different levels of motivations and power potential...in pursuit of a common or at least joint purpose" (Burns, 1978, p. 19). In this manner, both leaders and followers depend upon one another within the relationship; no transformational relationship can exist without one or the other. The distinguishable difference is that leaders are ultimately responsible for taking "the lead" in initiating and maintaining the relationship and for creating and sustaining connection through communication (Northouse, 2016).

While transformational leadership addresses an investment in establishing a common purpose, working collaboratively toward goals, and developing individuals within a system (Valentine & Prater, 2011), the field of education also needs leaders who are well versed in best teaching practices and facilitating processes of instruction (Shatzer et al., 2014). Thus, research suggests instructional leadership plays an integral role in the field of education. Bush and Glover (2003) explained instructional leadership, "focuses on teaching and learning and on the behavior of teachers in working with students. Leaders' influence is targeted at student learning via teachers" (p. 12). A common criticism of instructional leadership theory upon its earliest inception was the lack of clarity on exactly how leaders influence the process of learning (Bush & Glover, 2003).

Viviane Robinson's exploration (2008, 2010, 2011) of instructional leadership clarified how leaders influence the process of learning and established a foundation of leadership skills which informs current understanding of instructional leadership. Robinson (2011) described three skill sets building leaders must have when practicing instructional leadership. Instructional leaders must:

1. Make goal-oriented, informed decisions surrounding staffing and the procurement of instructional resources.
2. Be able to make sound decisions on the effectiveness of current resources in supporting student essential learning goals.
3. Be able to navigate the "human side" of acquiring and retaining the right people and tools to reach instructional goals.

Shatzer et al. (2014) built upon Robinson's work, recognizing instructional leadership characteristics include: Collaborating with teachers to address student needs, discussing student

achievement with both teachers and students, protecting instructional time, and providing clear instructional expectations (Shatzer et al., 2014). While other leadership models are recognized and heavily researched both inside and outside the field of education, "instructional leadership is the longest established concept linking leadership and learning" (Bush & Glover, 2014, p. 556).

Regardless of this established history, education researchers have spent the past 40 years analyzing the qualities and impact of both transformational leadership and instructional leadership (Boyce & Bowers, 2018; Edmonds, 1978; Hallinger, 1992, 2003; Leithwood, 2005; Robinson, 2008; Ross & Cozzens, 2016). One of the most frequently cited studies, conducted by Robinson et al. (2008), includes a meta-analysis of existing literature on the impact of transformational leadership and instructional leadership on student learning outcomes. Their findings indicate instructional leadership has three to four times the impact on student learning as transformational leadership (Robinson et al., 2008). Robinson et al. (2008) reasoned instructional leadership further influenced student learning because it provides clear leadership processes that influence instructional practices.

One criticism of transformational leadership that emerged from Robinson's research was transformational leadership tends to focus on general leadership qualities rather than concrete instructional processes and practices (Robinson et al., 2008). A recognition of leader impact on instructional practices supports another concern provided by Northouse (2016), suggesting, while transformational leaders have the ability to create a vision, model strong values and morals, and motivate others through connection, these are behavioral traits rather than explicit skills that can be developed in emerging leaders (Northouse, 2016).

Goodwin and Babo (2014) described the direct impact principals have on teacher professional development. Aimed at determining the types of leaders who inspire teacher

professional development, the authors surveyed 178 National Teacher of the Year recipients from all 50 states throughout six years, from 2006 through 2012. Goodwin and Babo (2014) determined school improvement is unlikely without strong, dynamic instructional leaders. Their survey findings further indicated the most important leadership strategies teachers associate with sound instructional leaders include: The ability to build relationships with teachers, frequent visibility throughout the school, and clear knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessments specific to all subject areas (Goodwin & Babo, 2014). Administrators have more direct impact on teachers through influencing instructional practices and professional development (Robinson et al., 2008).

As early as 2003, Hallinger recognized the value in integrating transformational and instructional leadership. After comparing the two leadership models, Hallinger (2003) asserted the "similarities between the models are more significant than the differences" (p. 342). Hallinger (2003) explained both leadership models focus on:

- Creating a shared sense of purpose in the school.
- Developing a climate of high expectations and a school culture focused on the improvement of teaching and learning.
- Shaping the reward structure of the school to reflect the goals set for staff and students.
- Organizing and providing a wide range of activities aimed at intellectual stimulation and development for staff.
- Being a visible presence in the school, modelling the values that are being fostered in the school. (Hallinger, 2003, p. 343).

In his study, Hallinger (2003) found an "integrated view of leadership … highlights the synergistic power of leadership shared by individuals throughout the school organization" (p. 345). In accordance with Hallinger, Robinson (2010) suggested leadership is more about how leaders engage with teachers, exhibit leadership traits, and follow through with the actions associated with leadership models than simply subscribing to a specific model of leadership.

Trust at the Foundation of Leadership

This literature review has focused on the history of evaluation and the roles of transformational and instructional leadership in the professional development of teachers. While the previous sections described foundational elements of feedback and leadership for teacher professional development, the following section describes what literature suggests about how trust is developed among individuals within an organization and how trust serves as a necessary catalyst for teacher professional development. As indicated by John Gardner (1990), trust exists at the foundation of any organization or society:

> The infinitely varied and complex doings of society--any society--would come to a halt if people do not trust other people most of the time--trust them to observe custom, follow the rules, and behave with some predictability. Countless systems operate to diminish that trust, but one may be sure that if the society is functioning at all, some degree of trust exists. (Gardner, 1990, p. 17)

While the word "trust" often emerges in leadership literature as integral to leader and follower relationships, there is ambiguity in existing research about what is meant by trust and how trust is built in school settings. The next section describes the varying constructs of trust as it exists in current educational literature.

Transformational leadership focuses on the relationships between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2016), and instructional leadership focuses on the instructive development of teachers (Robinson, 2011; Shatzer et al., 2014). Even as Burns (1978) introduced the ideas that would evolve into the transformational leadership model, he recognized power should not be synonymous with leadership and the core of leadership, influence, is about deeply human relationships.

Burns (1978) explained that understanding power in leadership requires an understanding of "mutual persuasion, exchange, elevation, and transformation" (p.11). Burns' (1978) beliefs about leader-follower relationships align with Hallinger (2003), who described a "mutual influence process" (p. 346) extending beyond the reciprocal influence of leaders to also include the influence of the school culture on the leader. "Leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good" (Ciulla, 2014, p. 15). Ciulla (2014) emphasized the need for a school culture in which leaders and followers nurture strong interpersonal relationships that power their pursuit of common goals. At the core of these interpersonal relationships resides trust. "Trust gives school leaders the respect and credibility they need for educators to listen to, collaborate with, and follow them" (Saphier, 2018, p. 14).

In Pursuit of Trust

The next section focuses on how research describes the development of trust between followers and leaders as a necessary social construct for successful organizations. Kellerman (2012) argued the last 40 years have provided a transferal of power from leaders to their followers. Power is shifting to those in a position to follow, as followers have access to as much or more information than leaders and collectively hold more power in a social contract. Echoing

this idea, Saphier (2018) recognized much power when it comes to the development of trust is possessed by the followers; when trust exists, followers ultimately make the choice to follow their leaders. “Thus it is those who would follow, not those who would lead, who have the ultimate power in any leadership relationship because they are the ones who can decide to give trust” (Solomon, 2014, p. 122).

The research conducted by Kellerman (2012) and Solomon (2014) regarding power and trust as integral to the social contract between followers and leaders is supported by Burns’ (1978) belief that power is not an attribute of leaders to hold over followers, rather power “occurs in relationships” (Northouse, 2016, p. 12) and should be used by both to foster collective goals of professional development. Solomon (2014), Saphier (2018), Kellerman (2012), and Burns (1978) emphasized the necessity of leader-follower relationships built on the existence of trust. Further, Solomon (2014) reasoned trust is the manifestation of a multitude of emotions and without trust, “there can be no cooperation, no community, no commerce, no conversation” (p.117).

Trust and Leadership

Describing what research suggests about the critical role trust plays in professional relationships provides additional context from which to build an understanding of the complexities surrounding educational leadership. Solomon (2014) viewed trust as dimensional; he explained the context and content of trust vary from person-to-person and situation-to-situation. For example, children often trust their parents without being consciously aware of the phenomenon until trust is broken. However, a new leader enters into an organization where followers may or may not have trusted the previous leader or may not have trust in the substance of the position as a whole. These leaders have little control over the context of their situation and

must depend upon whether followers decide to trust them (Solomon, 2014). Kellerman (2012) and Solomon (2014) asserted, then, this social contract of shared power and trust strengthens the foundation for professional development. Essential to this study is research suggesting the followers' ability to trust their building administrators is key to instructional improvement. Tschannen-Moran (2013) argued it is impossible to separate the role of leadership from the necessity of trust.

Trust and Transformational Leadership

Drawing on Valentine and Prater's (2011) summation of the tenets of transformational leadership as establishing a common purpose, working collaboratively toward goals, and developing individuals within a system, prevailing research on the development of trust seems critical to a transformational leadership approach. Northouse (2016) stated leaders build trust by articulating a vision and direction for realizing the vision. Further, transformational leaders develop trust through transparency, predictability, and reliability (p.173). Northouse (2016) highlighted one particular trait of trustworthy leadership that aligns with the findings of Feltman (2009), Handford and Leithwood (2012), Tschannen-Moran (2013), and Brown (2018); all distinguish reliability as critical to the development of trust between leaders and followers. A study conducted by Handford and Leithwood (2012) provided further insight into how teachers describe consistency and reliability as, "predictable patterns of action by principals, timely feedback about classroom and instructional activities, availability of classroom materials and supplies…routines related to discipline" (p. 204).

Trust and Instructional Leadership

Findings of Handford and Leithwood (2012) regarding trust and transformational leadership exist in concert with the description of instructional leadership as defined by Hallinger

and Murphy (2012), “Today, we view instructional leadership as an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teaching and learning” (p. 7). Hallinger and Murphy’s (2012) definition of instructional leadership highlights the distinguishable difference between transformational leadership and instructional leadership as the emphasis placed on guiding teaching and learning. Research suggests trust is equally critical in both approaches to educational leadership. “The literature on high-performing organizations shows that they are normally characterized by high trust and leaders who develop, nurture, and model trusting and authentic relationships” (Leithwood et al., 2013, p. 263).

Handford and Leithwood (2013) established there are a number of factors that must be considered for teachers to trust principals. In their study of teachers from high trust and low trust schools, competence in functional, work-related skills was one of the traits most frequently cited by teachers as an indicator of trustworthiness in administrators. Teachers described competence as principals being frequently visible in classrooms in both formal and informal observation and evaluation practices, including instructional planning with teachers and providing feedback about their instruction. Further, teachers identified the importance of principals being aware of what was happening in their classrooms, and they cited administrative involvement with their professional development as an indication that their leaders were close to the action of the classroom (Handford & Leithwood, 2013).

While Hallinger and Murphy (2012) recognized in their research time can be a barrier for effective instructional leadership, they found principals can intentionally engage in activities throughout the school day that improve learning conditions. “Instructional leadership is enacted in the hallways during conversations, when taking tickets at the lunchroom door, in meetings

with staff, during staff development days, and in PTA meetings" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012, p. 15).

Kenneth Leithwood and Karen Seashore-Louis (2011) engaged in a five-year study sponsored by the Wallace Foundation wherein they collected information from 43 school districts, across nine states, and 180 elementary, middle, and secondary schools, seeking to better understand effective school leadership. Their findings suggest that trust exists as a "precondition for leadership behaviors that will affect instruction" (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011, Trust, para. #15). Additionally, they concluded in schools with stronger cultures of trust, it is more likely that principals are engaged in more instructional behaviors (Leithwood & Seashore-Lous, 2011).

Trust, Leadership, and the Role of Feedback

Handford and Leithwood (2013) claimed competence is one of the "five characteristics of trustworthy leaders" (p. 208), describing competence from their study findings as, "… principals' formal and informal engagement in classroom observations and other classroom-based activities such as instructional planning with teachers and providing teachers with feedback about their instruction" (p. 202). These findings align with Meyer et al. (2017) research that aims to explain how trust is developed in relationships:

> We deem others trustworthy on the basis of their demonstration of benevolence, integrity and reliability. Perceived trustworthiness of others creates trust propensity, which is the dispositional willingness to rely on and ultimately trust others. Trust propensity involves feelings of vulnerability as even if we consider others as truthful and reliable, we can never be completely sure of their future reaction or behavior toward us. Trust propensity is evident when the possible negative consequences of others' reactions outweigh the

> possible benefit gained from the relationship. Trust encompasses the interrelationship of trust propensity and trustworthiness. (p. 221–222)

Meyer et al. (2017) highlighted the potential pitfalls for teachers who are asked to trust their leaders while simultaneously engaging in systems of evaluative feedback. Essentially, there are opposing dynamics at play: Teachers may be willing to be vulnerable about their instructional limitations with a leader whose main function is to help them improve. However, these same teachers may find it challenging to trust exposing their potential weaknesses to a leader when it may lead to their dismissal (Popham, 2013).

Conclusion

This literature review attempts to carry out multiple, interrelated tasks. First, it establishes the role of feedback as integral to teacher professional development, identifying that the primary source of instructional feedback is by way of teacher evaluation, which can serve two contradictory purposes: measuring teachers and developing teachers (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.; Marzano, 2012; Scholastic Inc., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009; Wise et al., 1984). Second, it describes two prominent educational leadership models with the intent of a) Identifying key characteristics of successful leaders in supporting teacher professional development and b) analyzing how two seemingly different leadership models actually form a symbiotic relationship leading to instructional improvement. In relationship to both leadership and evaluation as feedback, it underscores the importance of trust as foundational to leader-follower relationships, recognizing the current use of evaluative feedback does little to build trust or develop teachers in a manner that increases student achievement. Finally, this literature review established an understanding of three interrelated functions in the education system: feedback, leadership, and trust where at their intersection, exists an atmosphere for teacher professional

development. The following chapter describes the methods through which I conducted my data collection and analysis; a study that aims to fill a gap in existing literature regarding the voice of teachers and their lived experiences with feedback, trust in and from their leaders, and how all influence their professional development decisions.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter 3 describes the methods of research utilized in a study on leadership, feedback, and trust in a secondary school setting. The previous chapters focused on the purpose of this educational research study about the impact of leaders on teacher professional development decisions and also provided an extensive review of literature explaining existing research on the topics of educational leadership, systems of feedback in education, and the role of trust between educational leaders and followers. Thus, Chapter 3 describes the methods used when conducting research on the aforementioned themes and builds on the foundation of purpose and published scholarly work introduced in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

Drawing first upon why educational research is important, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained educators are constantly required to make critical decisions about their profession that have lasting impact on countless others, including: students, parents, peers, and community members. Typically, these decisions are made by accessing numerous sources of information that include "… personal experiences, expert opinion, tradition, intuition, common sense, and beliefs about what is right or wrong" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 3). Regardless of the effectiveness of some, or all, of these sources, situationally these may not provide the most warranted basis for decision-making.

One example of a critical decision in education that has historically been made utilizing traditional practices is that of teacher evaluation systems. Chapter 2 emphasized the historical evolution of teacher evaluation systems and described how educators have been questioning the functionality and impact of evaluative feedback on teacher professional development for decades (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Weisberg et al., 2009; Wise et al., 1984). The tradition of teacher

evaluation has changed very little in the past 60 years (Cogan, 1973; Goldhammer, 1969; Hunter, 1980; Marzano et al., 2011; Reinhorn et al., 2017; Weisberg et al., 2009; Wise et al., 1984). While numerous researchers agree teacher evaluation systems need to change, there is limited research available on exactly how and why instructional feedback from leaders supports teachers in their professional development decisions. This qualitative study illuminates the types of feedback and specific elements of leader-follower relationships that support teacher professional development.

Research Questions

I used qualitative research methodology to guide my case study on instructional feedback, leadership qualities, and professional development. While literature surrounding feedback, leadership, and trust factor into the foundation of my research, the purpose of this study is to further illustrate the elements of effective instructional feedback as well as deconstruct how trust can be built in leader-follower relationships. The following primary and secondary questions frame my work:

I. What are the lived experiences of tenured, secondary level Clifton School District teachers receiving instructional feedback from their building leaders?
    a. What types of feedback do tenured, secondary level Clifton teachers perceive as effective in shaping their professional development experiences and advancing student achievement?
    b. Why do tenured, secondary level Clifton teachers accept and act on feedback from leaders?

II. How do tenured, secondary level Clifton teachers understand the experience of teacher evaluation and its influence on their professional development decisions when seeking to enhance their instruction?

III. What impact does trust between principals and teachers have on professional development decisions for tenured, secondary level Clifton teachers?

   a. How do tenured, secondary level teachers define qualities of trust between leaders and followers?

   b. Why do tenured, secondary level teachers choose to trust their leaders?

   c. What is the impact of Covid-19 on trust in relationships between leaders and followers?

Research Design

Qualitative research served as the methodological approach of this study design. A qualitative approach best suits the nature of the study as I sought to understand the themes of leadership, feedback, and trust; all of which can be contextualized to the experiences of study participants and setting of the study. Qualitative methodology aligns with the epistemological position of interpretivism, which recognizes studying and observing human practices constructs a shared understanding of the examined phenomena based on the meanings created by the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A recognition that participants share in the construction of meaning regarding a specific phenomenon suggests aspects of the research design emerged as the study was conducted. Thus, changes from the original outline occurred as I gathered data from participants. Adaptability was necessary, as "… qualitative research is characteristically exploratory, fluid and flexible, data driven, and context-sensitive" (Mason, 2017, p. 25).

This study aimed to unravel the complexity of the effect of feedback on teacher engagement in professional development. Thus, a qualitative approach to data collection provided critical insights, expanding awareness around the construct of leading professional change. As suggested by the literature review in Chapter 2, research has been conducted around the effectiveness of teacher evaluations as a form of feedback for teachers; however, much of the research includes quantitative studies that are limited in the scope of teacher lived experiences. Numerous studies indicate evaluative feedback has scarce impact on teacher professional development decisions (Marzano, 2012; Weisberg, 2009). Further, studies have been conducted to narrow the most significant factors that contribute to effective instructional feedback (Cherasaro et al., 2016; Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016; Fink & Markholdt, 2013). Additional literature suggests trustworthy relationships between leaders and followers is a prerequisite in facilitating professional development (Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Popham, 2013). While literature surrounding feedback, leadership, and trust factor into the foundation of research for this dissertation, the purpose of this study was to gain better understanding of the look, feel, and sound of influential instructional feedback as well as dissect how trust can be built in leader-follower relationships. Therefore, conducting case study research allowed me to inquire into specific experiences and insights of participants.

To address the goals of this study, I gathered data through a qualitative critical case study. Data were collected through semi-structured, open-ended focus group interviews with 10 tenured, secondary teachers who engaged in feedback cycles with their building leaders. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling methods with the intent of engaging in critical case sampling. Critical case sampling provides specific information about a pre-determined issue and allows for logical generalizations across cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This proved true for the members of both focus groups, as they all spoke openly about collective professional development and evaluation experiences.

I purposefully selected the school district as the case studied because of their work surrounding instructional leadership and evolving methods of teacher evaluation systems. The approach this district is taking to provide teachers instructional feedback aligns with research discussed in Chapter 2 regarding the need for administrators to provide teachers with more frequent, formative feedback rather than providing only limited evaluative feedback. Literature suggests professional development should be tailored to individual teachers, including understanding of course content and instructional best practices; further, administrators should work alongside teachers in order to address specific needs and provide continuous feedback on instruction (Hill & Grossman, 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009). This district has taken strides in the past two years to provide more formative feedback to their teachers through intentional collaboration between administrators and teachers. To better describe the research plan for this study, I incorporated the following Table 1 identifying participants, research variables, analysis procedures, and overall data collection time frames.

Table 1

Research Plan

Objective	Specifics
Study Participants	Ten secondary (6-12) teachers from a Minnesota school district who are engaged in their evaluation cycle during the 2020-2021 school year.
Data Collection: Length of Time	Three to four weeks
Variables for Consideration	• Past and present experiences with cycles of evaluation • Past and present experiences with formative (coaching) feedback • Perceived administrative approach to evaluative feedback • Frequency and significance of formative (coaching) feedback • Perceived leadership qualities that nurture professional development decisions • Understanding and role of trust in leader-follower relationship (from the perspective of follower) • The impact of Covid-19 on participants and leaders
Basic Data Analysis	• Define emerging terms • Describe and classify code categories • Code interview data for consistent themes and patterns • Analyze for case themes and cross-case themes • Content analysis of feedback and professional development documents • Direct interpretation of single cases in order to identify patterns between two or more cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018). • Develop generalizations of key learnings from cases and across cases
Tools	• Google Docs for field notes and transcriptions • Google Docs for digital files of field notes • Digital folders to sort category files – hyperlinks • Digital concept-mapping tools to create visual comparisons of cases • Cross-case synthesis through tables via Word file(s) • Microsoft Teams for in-depth interviews
Length of Time for Data Analysis	Four weeks

Participants

Study participants were drawn from a school district in Greater Minnesota consisting of one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school. Participants included secondary, tenured teachers. The school district where I conducted my study is a district in Greater Minnesota not far from the district in which I work. My experience as an instructional coach within my district has enabled the development of professional relationships with curriculum leaders and instructional coaches from schools in our region. In this manner, I have developed a professional connection with the director of curriculum and instruction from the school district in which I seek to collect data. Through our professional meetings, I have learned about the approaches to instructional feedback this district is utilizing in an attempt to guide individual and collective professional development. It is because of the progressive strides this district has taken on instructional feedback that I sought them out as a site to conduct my study.

Throughout the past two school years, both teachers and administrators in this school district have actively engaged in collaborative approaches to teacher feedback cycles. While the decision to engage in interviews with me was completely optional, potential participants were made aware the interview process and my collective findings may influence future decisions surrounding teacher feedback cycles. Intentional measures have been taken in the past two years to develop a highly transparent system of teacher feedback and professional development. Teachers have been well-informed by the district administration of their quest to improve feedback systems; the findings, when shared with district leaders, serve as another way for teachers to have influence on a system that is evolving in order to best support their professional development. I intentionally selected a group [2] of people to participate in semi-structured, open-

[2] Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper to ensure anonymity of participants.

ended interviews. By purposefully selecting individuals who can "best inform the researcher" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 148), I engaged with participants who could describe their school's process for teacher evaluation, how feedback informs their professional development, and their perception of how trust factors into relationships with their leaders.

My sampling strategy was to select 10 secondary teachers who have engaged with their principal in feedback and evaluation cycles. The selection of this site was also intentional, as there is only one high school and one middle school, and the same administrators serve both the middle and high schools. This allowed for easier identification of cross-case themes, as variables such as leadership style, leadership expectations, and the process of teacher evaluation remained consistent from teacher to teacher. By closely studying this case, bounded by site, evaluation system, and duration of time, I was able to explore the impact of feedback and leader-follower relationships. This exploration consisted of gathering data through two focus group interviews that included 10 secondary teachers.

I chose to sample in this manner in order to explore the issue of teacher professional development by understanding how instructional feedback, leader-follower relationships, and the development of trust affect teacher professional development decisions. This case study focused on a sampling of secondary, tenured teachers within one school district. An in-depth understanding of the experiences of these teachers allowed for analysis of participant experiences as well as the cross-examination of themes that emerged collectively among the participants. Stake (2010) suggested:

> Two realities exist simultaneously and separately within every human activity. One is the reality of personal experience, and one is the reality of group and societal relationship. The two realities connect, they overlap, they merge, but they are recognizably different.

> What happens collectively (for a group) is seldom the aggregation of personal experience. (p. 18)

Stake (2010) identified the significance of seeking individual stories and also collective realities; a reality of the factors most influencing teacher professional development for this school district emerged where these individual stories intersect.

Role of the Researcher

As an educator for 19 years, 13 of which were spent as a high school English teacher and six of which have been spent as an instructional coach and teacher on special assignment as a curriculum implementation associate for the Humanities, my position in this research is that of a seasoned fellow practitioner and a new researcher. As a tenured and non-tenured teacher, I experienced multiple rounds of teacher evaluation cycles. My role as an instructional coach provided opportunities to engage in informal conversations with administrators and serve on numerous committees with district instructional leaders, building administrators, and teacher leaders. I have mentored new teachers, collaborated with new and veteran teachers, and engaged in curriculum development and grading reform. While all of these roles have given me countless experiences with both formal and informal feedback and evaluation cycles, I have yet to experience providing instructional feedback or nurturing leader-follower relationships from the position of building or district administrator.

Although my experiences do provide perspective and scope through both middle and high school teaching, instructional coaching, and providing non-evaluative feedback to my peers, my role in conducting this research was to learn from and represent the participants of this study in a way that clearly describes their experiences and emotions without interjecting my own opinions or beliefs. Doing so improves the validity of this study. I am passionate about the development of

trust-filled organizations that have a foundation of reciprocal feedback that fosters collective professional development. Thus, I approached my case study research with a phenomenological lens, exploring feedback and the development of trust within the case of this school district through the lived experiences of the participants.

Positionality as a Researcher

I recognize my own bias as I synthesized literature and approached my study. As a secondary educator for 19 years, my experience is limited to that of a teacher and instructional coach. I have not held the position of building administrator, thus my understanding of day-to-day expectations of building principals is limited to my observations as a teacher and a coach. While I had experiences with teacher evaluation that align with the findings of numerous research studies, I also recognize my evaluation experiences are specific to my one school in one district within the state of Minnesota.

Research Ethics

Ethical research issues can arise at any phase in the research process; the following section illuminates the ways in which I addressed potential ethical concerns throughout the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended analyzing which ethical issues can arise at each phase in the study in order to thoroughly consider the entire research process. The following paragraphs break down the phases of research, highlight each potential ethical issue, and describe the solutions to each issue.

Prior to beginning my study, I sought preliminary site approval from a school district in rural Minnesota (Appendix A). The next step included gaining university approval by submitting my Institution Review Board application (Appendix B). Upon approval, I officially gained access to the site and engaged in focus group interviews with participants. As I conducted the

study and collected data, ethical participant treatment and maintaining confidentiality were two main concerns.

I met with all participants virtually for initial introductions, explanation of study purpose, and to gain informed consent (Appendix C). Providing an informed consent form indicated to the participants that engaging in this study was voluntary. The participants were not members of a vulnerable population, so no special provisions were necessary. One issue that needed to be addressed prior to beginning data collection was determining where and when it was appropriate to engage in interviews. Approval should be gained in order to, "… provide the least disruption to the activities at the site" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 57). Covid-19 impacted the decision on where and when to engage in interviews. Participants were not comfortable meeting in-person, so we decided to meet virtually. I used the Microsoft Teams platform to engage in interviews with participants.

There were opportunities to build trust with participants when determining logistical elements and while engaging in interviews and observations. I built trust with participants by being respectful of their time commitment and availability. Further, I was transparent about the purpose of the study, my experiences with the phenomena at the center of the study, and my plan to protect participant anonymity. Of paramount importance was protecting the identity of participants. The school district where I collected data consists of few enough teachers that it is possible descriptors could hint at participant identities. I was transparent with the participants about this reality while also taking into sincere consideration how the information collected and shared could personally and professionally impact them. Member checking helped ensure participants are comfortable with my description of their experiences. My member checking protocol is further described below in the section on Instrumentation and Protocols.

I conducted focus group interviews with teachers regarding their experiences with teacher evaluation systems. Their responses reflected on both the district and their immediate supervisors, thus protection of participants is vital to my study. Maxwell (2013) explained the necessity of researchers putting themselves in the shoes of the participants while also learning about participants' perceptions of them and what they understand about the research design and goals. Feltman's (2009) definition of trust fits well in this situation: Trust is choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to the actions of another. Participants undoubtedly value their careers, their reputations, and the relationships they have with their peers and supervisors. By choosing to participate in research, they made themselves vulnerable to my actions as the researcher. Thus, it was critical that I built trusting, ethical, professional relationships with participants. Transparency, communication, and member checking all helped ensure I represented participant experiences in a way that accurately captured their experiences while working to mitigate the risks they took in working with me.

My data collection illuminated the effectiveness of teacher evaluation cycles, the influence of instructional feedback on teacher professional development decisions, and the leadership qualities that foster professional development. Teachers described their experiences, thus providing only a partial lens of these phenomena. While by design, this limited view also put the participants in a vulnerable position, as they do not possess the positional power prescribed to administrators in their respective buildings. As Fraenkel et al. (2019) explained,

> … there is the possibility that certain research findings, when in the hands of the powerful, may lead to actions that could actually hurt subjects (or people in similar circumstances) and/or lead to public policies or public attitudes that are actually harmful to certain groups. (p. 394)

In an attempt to consider potential implications of my work, I have been transparent with the superintendent, high school and middle school principals, and the director of curriculum and instruction about my intentions in this study.

For participants and all those impacted by the findings of this study, I was transparent and forthright in my study purpose and processes. Fraenkel et al. (2019) provided a list of questions to consider in order to protect participants and those impacted by study findings. Questions I kept central to my data collection and the writing of this paper include:

I. Have the participants in the study been given full information about what the study will involve?
II. Who owns the data that will be collected and analyzed in this study?
III. How will the results of the study be used? Is there any possibility for misuse? If so, how? (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 394).

The content of these questions was addressed directly with both the participants and their administrators prior to engaging in data collection in order to ensure clarity on the process and on future use of any information gathered and shared.

Instrumentation and Protocols

In qualitative research design, the researcher is the instrument, as much of the data collection depends upon their personal involvement and actions. Describing instrumentation and thoroughly planning protocols of research support the valid and reliable collection of data. Semi-structured, open-ended focus group interviews served as the primary source of data in my study. Creswell and Poth (2018) described the protocol sequence of interviews. The interview sequence began with the preparation of interview questions that are “open-ended, general, and focused on understanding [my] central phenomenon of the study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 165).

In order to address reliability and validity in the interview, I engaged in a pilot study to ensure the interview questions concentrated on the intended phenomena and to refine my questions and data collection plan prior to conducting study interviews. “The pilot case is more formative, assisting [me] to develop relevant lines of questions—possibly even providing some conceptual clarification for the research design, as well” (Yin, 2017, p. 106). Interview questions were as follows:

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What grade levels and subjects have you taught?
3. How many schools and licensed principals have you had the opportunity to work with?
4. How would you describe instructional feedback experiences with your principals?
5. How would you describe instructional feedback in professional development that has enhanced student growth?
6. How would you describe approaches to teacher evaluations in your teaching experience?
7. How would you describe your experiences with evaluative feedback?
8. When we think of feedback, research describes three different arenas: coaching, evaluative, and appreciative. How would you describe experiences with all three of these approaches in mind?
9. How would you describe your evaluation experiences in this district?
10. When you need support or help with instruction, who have you in the past/do you seek out/would you seek out?
11. Why do you go to this individual?

12. What qualities does this individual possess?

13. What qualities of an administrator help facilitate your professional growth?

14. How would you define trust in a professional environment?

15. What does trust look like between administrators and teachers?

16. How has trust played a part in receiving and accepting feedback?

17. How has instructional feedback impacted your professional development decisions?

18. Are there any questions you believe I should be asking about this topic?

The next step in the interview sequence included identifying interviewees who provided critical case typology in order to allow for "logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 159). I interviewed tenured, secondary teachers who have engaged in evaluation cycles with their current administrator.

The steps following the selection of interviewees included the logistical elements of engaging in interviews. Prior to conducting each interview, I reviewed with participants the purpose for my study, the time commitment for the interview process, and the risks that could be associated with their involvement, also identifying ways in which I attempted to mitigate the risks. Further, I described my member checking plan, which included allowing each participant to read my findings to ensure I effectively represented their experiences. Finally, I reminded each teacher their participation was voluntary. At this point, I asked participants to sign an informed consent document.

Next, I conducted focus group interviews with participants. In collaboration with district administration, the decision was made to move from one-to-one interviews to focus group interviews. This decision was made as a result of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic and its impact on teachers as this school district shifted between distance learning and in-person teaching

models. Focus group interviews allowed us to increase the number of case study participants while also capitalizing on time commitments. “By creating a social environment in which group members are stimulated by one another’s perceptions and ideas, the researcher can increase the quality and richness of data through a more efficient strategy than one-on-one interviewing” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 363). Further, the global pandemic required a shift from in-person interviews to virtual interviews; my process of conducting these interviews is described next.

I engaged in virtual interviews through Microsoft Teams, which allowed for audio and video representation. As it was necessary to conduct virtual interviews, I sought permission from the participants to record conversations through Microsoft Teams and with an additional audio recording device. When discussing the recording of conversations, I also made certain participants were aware I may ask follow-up questions to probe deeper into their responses. I wanted to ensure their comfort and awareness of the in-depth interview process through a virtual platform. All participants were open to individualized, follow-up conversations; however, the focus group interviews provided rich data and follow-up conversations were not necessary.

As the main source of data collection, I kept central to my work the idea that, “… a good interviewer is a good listener rather than a frequent speaker during an interview” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 166). Listening well was a critical strategy in both building trust with the participants and ensuring the accuracy of my documentation of their experiences. In addition to taking detailed notes on the interview questions, I recorded interviews in transcript form in order to code data for interpretation and analysis.

Procedures and Analysis

Gathering and sharing interview data was wholly dependent upon my ability to make accurate and detailed descriptions of the case and setting as expressed by each participant and their experiences. While this singular school district acts as the overall case I studied, I engaged with multiple participants in order to triangulate interview and document data of collective experiences to identify common themes, similarities, and differences among teachers who have received instructional feedback. The selection of these participants was discussed in detail earlier in the Participants section of this chapter.

I engaged in this case study with a phenomenological lens, thus in-depth, focus-group interviews with individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of evaluative feedback cycles provided rich experiential data to analyze for common themes. Thorough interviews lent to what Creswell and Poth (2018) described as "A hallmark of a good qualitative case study is that it presents an in-depth understanding of the case" (p. 98). From these interviews, I identified case themes that "… represent issues or specific situations to study in each case" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 98).

Yin (2017) explained case study research is concerned with complex "how" and "why" questions. In this study, I collected data on a number of how and why questions all aimed at unraveling the complexity of teacher engagement in professional development. The following questions sought participant responses to essential how and why questions:

1. How effective are evaluative feedback cycles in relationship to teacher professional development?
2. How do leaders and followers develop trust-filled relationships?
3. How do leaders nurture professional development in their teachers?

4. Why do teachers choose to engage in professional development?

While these how and why questions guided the purpose of the study, the procedures and analysis outlined in this section ensured the viability of case study design.

Providing detailed methodic procedures, describing limitations, and fairly reporting evidence all factor into the viability of case study research. A concern in case study research described by Yin (2017) is the general use of the term "case study" in social science fields. Terms related to educational examples as cases, "popular" case studies, and "case records" can be confused with "research case studies," the latter requiring distinct communication of procedures and methods (Yin, 2017). Thus, this section continues to lay out the distinctive methodology and procedures that distinguish this as a research case study.

The previous section outlined the necessary steps in semi-structured focus group interviews. The next paragraphs break down the procedures involved in analyzing the data from interviews and documents. The first step in analyzing case study data was to visually organize the data in a way that allowed for identification of themes and patterns. Yin (2017) recommended working data "from the ground up" (p. 169); this process required close review of the data in order to code emerging patterns and themes.

The next step included pattern matching with data related to questions about participant experiences with evaluative feedback. A goal in pattern matching is to strengthen internal validity by matching case findings to predicted findings from empirical research conducted before completing the study (Yin, 2017). Further analysis was done by detailing focus group interviews for significant themes and patterns before engaging in comparative analysis of each interviewee in order to identify common themes and patterns. Through this process, I focused on

key issues through an analysis of themes, which allowed for an understanding of the complexity of the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

All focus group data was organized in a case study database utilizing Word and Excel files. Forms of narrative data included field notes, interview transcripts, and narrative descriptions. Separate from the report of data findings, the case study database increased the reliability of the data collection process, as this database can be inspected and analyzed separate from my reported findings (Yin, 2017). I organized these files by major topics with the goal of creating a "chain of evidence" (Yin, 2017), that increases the ability of readers to trace the evidentiary process to better understand findings. Reduced probability of bias occurs when all evidence is collected in one location and this evidence is organized in a manner that clearly describes the process of collecting data; these conditions lend to construct validity, thus increasing the quality of the study (Yin, 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This study provides valuable insight into the complex relationships between leaders and followers and the approaches to instructional feedback that most affect teachers and their professional development decisions. However, restrictions to the scope of this study do exist based on factors both within and beyond my control. First, this study was conducted with a number of assumptions in mind. Two critical assumptions to the work of this study were that teachers have been involved in evaluation cycles with their administrators and these evaluation cycles served as the primary feedback teachers receive on their instructional practices.

Second, limitations beyond the control of this researcher exist and must be factored into the study design and subsequent results. A number of limitations for my study emerged as the results of COVID-19. This global pandemic caused school closures beginning in March 2020,

resulting in students and teachers moving to online instruction and learning. As we began the 2020-2021 school year, COVID-19 was again affecting the traditional teaching day and model of instruction. Many secondary sites shifted in and out of a distance learning format throughout the school year, which presented a number of limitations for my study. First, I was unable to engage with participants in-person. Interviews and observations were limited to online interactions and experiences. The inability to connect in-person may have affected the building of trust between me as the researcher and my participants and did limit my ability to read non-verbal cues. Second, instructional feedback provided to teachers was limited or non-existent when teachers were conducting online lessons. I asked teachers to recall the effectiveness of instructional feedback, which many had not received in the recent past. Additionally, trust teachers have in their leaders was impacted by decisions required by COVID-19; decisions that are certainly not typical in leader-follower relationships.

Next, I made a number of decisions to limit the scope of this study in order to set realistic boundaries. In order to narrow the focus for an in-depth analysis of human experiences, this study was limited to one school district in Greater Minnesota. The intention of this choice was to provide a thorough case study that explored the phenomena of instructional feedback and the development of trust within one organization. By providing an in-depth analysis of this case and cross-referencing themes that emerged in the data, it was possible to generalize findings within this district and provide material for study beyond this district. Furthermore, existing literature suggests the issue of evaluation serving as the main form of instructional feedback to teachers extends beyond the borders of Minnesota (Reinhorn et al., 2017; Weisberg, et al., 2009). Thus, there is space to expand research beyond the state of Minnesota in order to gather a larger sample from which to draw data around leadership, feedback, and trust.

Further, I only collected data from tenured, secondary teachers. This decision was made to narrow the scope of study thus better enabling the gathering of rich data that can be cross-examined among research participants. The experiences of elementary and secondary teachers are different in relationship to their instructional content and format of their school day; therefore, opportunities for administrators to engage with teachers at each level can look and feel very different. Although I am not including the perspectives of administrators or from non-tenured teachers or educators in the primary grade levels, all of these perspectives would add valuable insight into the complex challenges of facilitating professional development in schools and districts.

A final delimitation recognizes this study only focuses on tenured teachers without taking into consideration gender identification, race, ethnicity, or age of leaders or followers. While this study aims to be a foundation for better understanding leader-follower relationships, undoubtedly there is work to be done in studying more complex relationships when it comes to understanding intersections of identity when combined with leadership, feedback, and trust.

Conclusion

This chapter described the actionable research and data collection steps that support the purpose of gaining insight into the factors that contribute to teacher professional development. Specifically, this chapter detailed the role of the researcher, the role of the participants, and the process for conducting research within a qualitative case study methodology. Case study design places the experiences of the participant at the center of the issue under exploration. The described study ensured this researcher, as the main instrument of data collection, maintained an ethical stance within the methodological process of conducting focus group interviews and synthesizing data. While the nature of qualitative research suggests

an evolution of design as the research process unfolds, this chapter provided a strong foundation for the study. The following chapter describes the findings of the study as well as an analysis of the study findings.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

Data collected in this case study drew from two focus group interviews with 10 participants. The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of teachers who have engaged in feedback cycles with their administrators in order to advance student learning. Chapter 2 provided foundational analysis of the abundant literature available describing the history of teacher evaluation systems, the role of feedback in teacher professional development, and the importance of transformational and instructional leadership in education. This case study sought to add to existing literature by drawing on specific, lived experiences of teachers who can describe the type of feedback that most influences their work in advancing student learning, what aspects of administrative leadership effect their professional decisions, and how leader-follower trust feels and contributes to their professional experience.

In this case study, numerous interwoven themes emerged from the experiences of teachers in two separate focus groups. The backgrounds and current teaching positions of these 10 individuals vary, and so do their experiences and beliefs about feedback, trust, and professional development. These experiences and beliefs shed light on circumstances that can support or encumber the influence of feedback on the professional development and instructional efficacy of teachers. In the following chapter, I examine themes of feedback, leadership, trust, and professional development through the lens of participants' words and stories. I have positioned their experiences within the existing literature analyzed in Chapter 2. First, I begin by describing the decision to shift from individual interviews to focus group interviews, as this approach influences the way in which I chose to examine critical themes in this chapter.

Focus Group Interviews

Beginning in the spring of 2020, the spread of COVID-19 throughout the United States had both direct and indirect impact on this study for me as the researcher, for the school district in which I conducted the case study, and for individual study participants. As the model of teaching shifted between in-person instruction to distance learning to the hybrid model, teacher workload also evolved in ways that impacted availability for this study. Due to participant time constraints and workload, a decision was made in collaboration with district leadership to move from a one-to-one interview protocol to a focus group interview protocol. This change resulted in numerous positive outcomes and also provided two related limitations.

Positive outcomes of focus group interviews include the ability for participants to share their beliefs by expanding upon those shared by colleagues. Creswell and Poth (2018) described focus groups as, "advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with one another, [and] when time to collect information is limited …." (p. 164). Certainly, time was a primary concern due to the impact of COVID-19, but these focus groups proved advantageous due to participant cooperation, experiences in the same district, and subject-alike teaching practices.

One overarching limitation evident in the focus group interviews was the balance of voices. Some participants shared openly; others answered fewer questions. A participant even acknowledged appreciation for the presence of a more vocal colleague because this individual often spoke on behalf of the group. Similarly, focus group interviews can also make it more challenging for participants to share dissenting opinions. However, because I offered the opportunity for participants to follow-up individually, and I delineated individual thoughts as

they were presented, I feel the opinions presented as summations or "representative of the group" do exhibit collective beliefs.

A strength of focus group interviews is the potential for an environment wherein participants draw and build on one another's ideas. This environment created a natural flow in conversation from one theme to the next. Because of the natural flow of each conversation, I chose to group information by theme rather than organize this chapter by the individual experiences of each participant. Throughout my analysis, I grounded the interview themes in the same organizational pattern as the Chapter 2 Literature Review, as this format best captures the interrelated nature of feedback, leadership, and trust.

Intended Audience and Participant Voice

The intended audience of the findings presented in this study is school leadership: administrators, teachers, and school board members, who, according to Minnesota state law, are tasked with supporting and engaging in cycles of feedback that aim to inform teacher professional development. The Minnesota Teacher Tenure Act, Section 41, Subd. 5 (2019) states:

> (a) To improve student learning and success, a school board and an exclusive representative of the teachers in the district, consistent with paragraph (b), may develop an annual teacher evaluation and peer review process for probationary and non-probationary teachers through joint agreement….
>
> (b) To develop, improve, and support qualified teachers and effective teaching practices and improve student learning and success, and provide all enrolled students in a district or school with improved and equitable access to more effective and diverse teachers, the annual evaluation process for teachers:

> This statute includes 13 criteria; the following three criteria are highlighted for the purposes of this study:
>
> (2) must establish a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes an individual growth and development plan, a peer review process, and at least one summative evaluation performed by a qualified and trained evaluator such as a school administrator;
>
> (3) must be based on professional teaching standards established in rule;
>
> (4) must coordinate staff development activities under
>
> sections 122A.60 and 122A.61 with this evaluation process and teachers' evaluation outcomes. (Teacher Tenure Act, 2019)

While this state statute describes the legal requirements of teacher evaluation and coordinating teacher professional development, central to my work is the lived experiences of teachers who have engaged in observations, feedback, and evaluation processes with varying impact on their professional careers. I sought to understand, from the perspectives of teachers, how these experiences ultimately influence their instructional practices and professional development decisions.

In the following pages, I analyze in-depth the themes that emerged through the focus group interviews. In order to center the experiences of the participants, I use their words whenever possible. I also provide collective beliefs when ideas were expressed that members of the group agreed upon.

Feedback

Although feedback is the general topic of this dissertation, the complexity of leadership, trust, and feedback form an interdependent relationship that can make it challenging to separate

one from another. The findings from the focus group interviews also represent this interdependency. I begin this section by discussing feedback, as it forms the foundation of this paper. Next, I unravel participant experiences with professional development and then leadership, specifically focusing on the development of trust. Although it is necessary to separate the themes of feedback, leadership, and trust for the sake of clarity and exclusive influence on teachers, also true is the interconnection of these three elements and their combined effect on teachers' professional development decisions. The following section describes the experiences of the focus group participants with varying forms of feedback and specifies how these experiences align with the research presented in Chapter 2.

Appreciation Feedback

Appreciation feedback was defined in Chapter 1 as being: "fundamentally about relationship and human connection" (Stone & Heen, 2014, p. 30). This type of feedback ensures people feel their work and efforts are noticed and appreciated by their leaders. The main purpose of providing appreciation feedback is, "To see, acknowledge, connect, motivate, [and] thank" (Stone & Heen, 2014, p. 35). Participants agreed that they are often at the receiving end of that which Stone and Heen (2014) described as appreciation feedback. Numerous participants mentioned how administrators stop by their classrooms or intentionally seek them out to express appreciation for their work and encourage them to try new teaching strategies. Ellen spoke about the impact of this type of appreciative feedback, "I do think I am trusted to do my job. I am encouraged to try new things and step outside the box. I am trusted to do creative things." A noteworthy point Ellen made is the connection between appreciative feedback and the development of trust in a relationship between leaders and followers. Trust is discussed later in

this chapter, and this theme of being trusted to do a job emerged as a critical component of trust in this district for a number of the study participants.

While several participants described their experiences and gratitude for appreciative feedback, one participant shared a noteworthy belief that challenges the use of generalized appreciative feedback as a method for advancing student learning. Paul acknowledged receiving appreciative feedback from his leaders and felt appreciative feedback without specific evidence can be difficult to accept. Paul explained, "Unless there is some indication that [leaders] actually know what I'm doing, and that it is working in my room, with my students, then I do not see the point of [generalized feedback]." Paul highlighted a point made by Stone and Heen (2014), who explained for appreciation feedback to move people to action, it must be specific, authentic, and it must be in a form that the receiver values (pp. 37–38). Paul's statement in union with Stone and Heen's (2014) work recognized two challenges for leaders when providing teachers with feedback: 1) The difficulty of having detailed knowledge of daily instruction and classroom culture in order to provide specific, authentic feedback and 2) awareness of how teachers prefer to receive appreciation or recognition.

Coaching Feedback

The need for authentic feedback, specific to individual teachers and their classrooms, was another common theme in both focus group discussions. These qualities of feedback are critical for effective coaching feedback, defined by Stone and Heen (2014) as, feedback aimed at helping people "learn, grow, or change" (p. 32). Participants shared a variety of experiences with coaching feedback that represented moments both within and outside their current district.

The focus of this case study was on teacher experiences within this district; however, a number of participants positioned their experiences within the larger scope of their teaching

career. Therefore, I am including experiences that took place outside this district in order to provide context for participants' current beliefs about feedback and their professional development. This positioning of current experiences within respective professional timelines also represents a finding about teacher professional development experiences. Specifically, three participants, in particular, discussed how their current experiences in receiving instructional feedback compare to previous experiences in other school districts with different administrators. Participants noted factors such as instructional self-efficacy, the inclination to ask for help, and to whom they go for help are influenced by previous experiences.

Participants described in detail how experiences influence their current beliefs. For example, Elizabeth described a time when she co-taught with a principal and how this experience had lasting impact on her instructional practices. She recalled this principal, "… kept up with their teaching and instruction by trying out best practices." Further, both Paul and Elizabeth referred to past teaching experiences when administrators taught their own classes. Paul explained, in his experience when principals have taught, the collective conversation was on ensuring everyone's instruction was going "in the right direction." A discussion on administrators who simultaneously teach took place among the larger context of teacher experiences with coaching feedback. Participants who have worked with administrators who concurrently taught their own class indicated getting frequent feedback that ensured they were "on the right track" in accordance to the district vision for student learning.

In addition to feedback that affirms teacher efficacy, participants further explained characteristics of effective feedback include: frequent classroom observations, pedagogical awareness, and content specific instructional support. Paul provided the following insights regarding the need for frequent observations and content specific feedback.

> Ideally, feedback is most valid when the person giving it has been in your class or seen your class work or not [work]. There can be some validity to [feedback] when administrators have gained information secondhand from students, parents, even some from data that has patterns, for instance, in grades. Patterns can be telling and worth noticing and asking why patterns exist. Ideally, [administrators] observe and know. The more the better.

The need for frequent observations and for feedback to be specific to teacher, subject, and class emerged as themes in both focus group conversations. These findings align with research done by Cohen and Goldhaber (2016) as described in Chapter 2. The work of Cohen and Goldhaber (2016) emphasized the need for administrators to make sure feedback is timely and frequent and "includes specific suggestions to improve content and subject knowledge, instructional strategies, [and] classroom management …" (p.11).

Another focus group participant illustrated the need for frequent classroom observations. Lynn explained, "If administrators do not understand the culture of the classroom, then they may not understand why teachers are making instructional decisions when planning." Lynn's explanation of the need for administrators to have abundant understanding of daily classroom events, in concert with the findings of Cohen and Goldhaber (2016), highlight the critical function of collaboration between administrators and teachers. Hunter (1980) emphasized this very need for collaboration as a way for supervisors and teachers to "share responsibility for the teacher's continuous growth" (p. 412).

Evaluation Feedback

Stone and Heen (2014) described evaluation feedback as that which provides the recipient an idea about where they stand in relationship to an established set of standards.

Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 overwhelmingly suggests evaluative feedback functions as the main source of instructional feedback for teachers (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.; Marzano, 2012; Scholastic Inc., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009). In 2016, the National Education Association adopted new policy that required evaluations to include "regular, non-evaluative formative feedback" and "feedback linked to tailored professional development" (p. 21). This new policy suggests an awareness of and response to the findings of myriad educational scholars who indicate teacher evaluation cycles provide the most consistent feedback to teachers about their instructional practices. While scholars agree evaluation cycles are often the main form of instructional feedback provided to teachers, they also noted this is problematic, as evaluation is often utilized to serve two contradictory purposes: measuring teachers and developing teachers (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.; Marzano, 2012; Scholastic Inc., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009).

Evidence of the confusion surrounding these contradictory purposes of measurement and development emerged in the focus group interviews. When discussing evaluative feedback, participants mentioned an uncertainty about the state policy outlining the need for evaluation cycles, described wide-ranging experiences with evaluation cycles, and provided various perspectives on the overall need for evaluation cycles. These divergent experiences and perspectives emphasized the complexities surrounding teacher evaluation processes due, in part, to the confounding nature of asking evaluation to serve the aforementioned contradictory purposes of teacher measurement and teacher professional development. Elizabeth affirmed an element of this confusion when describing her own uncertainty over whether districts have a legal requirement to conduct classroom observations. What follows are participant experiences that suggest incongruent understanding of the intent and purpose of teacher evaluation cycles.

Four participants discussed, in the context of desiring feedback that nurtured professional development, past teacher evaluations have often not reflected accurate representations of what happens in their classes. Lynn explained, “It is difficult for administrators to come in two to three times a year without knowledge of how students act [on a regular basis] and the culture of the classroom.” Others agreed, discussing frequency and duration of observations as important factors. Elizabeth clarified, “If you only see 20 minutes of my lesson on a random day, without context of what is true of this group of students yesterday and tomorrow, it feels more like a checkbox than something meaningful.”

Participant experiences reflect a prominent research finding that emerged time and again throughout education literature in the past 50 years: Evaluation cycles as the primary form of feedback have not been effective in supporting systems of professional development that fosters student learning. However, teacher evaluations are a common mainstay of education. Thus, in the absence of evaluation as a main form of feedback, what takes its place? The answer to this question was unclear to focus group participants. A number of participants described confusion about their experiences with feedback throughout their careers.

One source of teacher confusion was evident as participants described experiences with evaluative feedback that do not align with the themes presented in Chapter 2. Although research suggests the primary form of feedback received by teachers is evaluation feedback, this was not the case for the majority of focus group members, as they cited limited experiences with evaluation cycles in their recent past. This discrepancy between research and experience does, however, reflect the changing landscape of teacher evaluation described in cited literature (Weisberg et al., 2009).

Upon first glance, the experiences of the 10 focus group participants do not entirely align with the literature findings described in Chapter 2 regarding evaluative feedback being the main source of feedback received by teachers. Most participants reflected upon how infrequently they have experienced traditional evaluation cycles, and each expressed unique feelings about the absence of evaluative feedback. What is noteworthy, is that the experiences of the focus group participants reflect the evolving widespread beliefs about the effectiveness of stand-alone teacher evaluation cycles in providing feedback and in motivating professional development.

Overall, participants spoke less about the occurrence of evaluation cycles as legal matters or in regard to their retention than about the importance of receiving timely feedback specific to their courses. This emphasis on receiving more frequent, formative feedback aligns with the findings of Marzano et al. (2011), which suggested teacher evaluation should occur as a culmination of professional development done throughout the year, solidifying a theme that reflects participant experiences and does align with research in Chapter 2. Evaluative feedback should transpire at the outcome of professional development rather than act as a catalyst for professional development (Hunter, 1980).

Professional Development

Participant descriptions of types of feedback indicated a variety of experiences in frequency, specificity, and relativity. The same can be said for participant description of the impact of feedback on their professional development. The following section describes participant experiences with the influence of feedback on their professional development.

Participants primarily described coaching feedback as that which most influenced their professional development decisions. These descriptions and beliefs align with existing literature indicating teachers and administrators should work collaboratively when considering

instructional practices and professional development experiences. The findings of Hill and Grossman (2013) build upon the work of Marzano et al. (2011) and Weisberg et al. (2009), who concluded strides in professional development should be made with administrators working alongside teachers. Additionally, this partnership ensures administrators understand course content so teachers and administrators can collaborate on instructional best practices (Hill & Grossman, 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009). Ellen further addressed the need for collaboration on instruction and professional development, as she explained she often knows what she needs for professional development and acknowledged her needs may not match the needs of other colleagues.

Collaboration between leaders and followers provides a platform for coaching feedback, as Stone and Heen (2014) explained the purpose of coaching feedback is, "To help [the] receiver expand knowledge, sharpen skill, and improve capability" (p. 35). However, Stone and Heen (2014) recognized coaching feedback can be challenging, as obstacles can emerge in ways that can result in the suffering of morale, relationships, and learning. The participants highlighted a number of obstacles that have occurred throughout their careers in the forms of infrequent observations, generalized feedback, or limited awareness of specific classroom culture or students. Stone and Heen (2014) identified a solution to these challenges by explaining, "Ideally, we receive coaching and appreciation year-round, day by day, project by project" (p. 44). This need for sustained collaboration is ideal in theory but can prove challenging in practice due to principal availability and extensive job responsibilities.

Participants agreed ideally feedback bears most influence on their respective professional development; however, focus groups members also understood numerous challenges faced by administrators in providing detailed, subject-specific feedback in a secondary setting. In fact, a

fundamental theme woven throughout both focus group discussions was the perceived limitation on administrators' ability to provide content-specific instructional feedback to individual teachers. While some participants indicated a clear desire for instructional feedback specific to their subject area, they and others recognized time and the background experiences of their past and present administrators are limiting factors that complicate this process. It is worth noting participants voiced understanding about the challenge faced by some administrators to have detailed knowledge of all subjects taught at the secondary level. Paul expressed this understanding by explaining it is not fair to expect administrators to be "an expert in every course."

Even while there existed a tension between the desire for specific instructional feedback and the ability for administrators to provide this form of feedback, participants were able to describe specific ways in which administrators had influenced, or were in a position to influence, teacher professional development. While focus group participants spent much of their time discussing instructional feedback and its impact on their professional development, they also recognized instructional feedback need not only come from building administrators. Several participants noted receiving feedback from students, parents, and colleagues is also helpful to their professional development. Sarah went so far as explaining feedback acquired from her students every Friday is what has "kept me in this profession." In fact, three participants discussed asking students for feedback about how things are going in class. They described student feedback as influential to their professional development decisions and helpful in making sure their instruction is "going in the right direction."

Participants acknowledged the desirability of feedback from leadership that indicates whether their work aligns with the district vision. Nevertheless, they also explained obtaining

feedback from students does align with an underlying vision of this district, summarized by Paul as: “helping all students learn.” Although indirectly related to the purpose of this case study, participants did indicate a connection between student feedback and their professional development. This finding can be positioned in the context of feedback that supports teacher professional development, and this theme reappears later in the paper as a recommendation for further study.

While some participants expressed a desire for specific feedback on instruction derived from frequent observations, others discussed feeling supported in their professional development endeavors in ways that did not require classroom presence. Joy acknowledged for most elective courses, it is difficult for those not trained in the area to have specific subject area knowledge. Nevertheless, participants identified another way leaders can and do support professional development without having specific subject area knowledge.

Supporting professional development experiences and ensuring teachers have the supplies they need can also have a positive effect on teachers. Dean explained, in his experience, administrators “respect our expertise in the [teaching] area and support us through supplies and [fulfill] our needs to do our job.” Dean’s observation aligns with findings described in Chapter 2. Handford and Leithwood (2012) included the “availability of classroom materials and supplies” among the ways in which administrators can provide “predictable patterns of action” (p. 204), that lend to reliable and consistent leadership.

Participants continued to express understanding that administrators have time limitations on frequently visiting classrooms; with this in mind, four participants cited indirect ways in which they feel administrators have supported their professional development. One particular instance cited by participants was when the entire staff, including administrators, engaged in

professional development together. Two specific examples were cited: CPR training and recent work in identifying essential student outcomes (ESO) for each subject area. One caveat for this approach is that the focus of the work must apply to everyone.

Participants also cited additional ways in which they felt their administrators had clear understanding of their classroom experiences and administrative actions supported their specific professional growth needs. Dean explained often it is up to him to seek out his own professional development opportunities, and support for his individual growth is shown by administrators clearing a path for him to attend these professional development experiences. This form of professional development support was echoed by two additional members of this focus group, both of whom recognized administrators may not have specific understanding of their subject area, but they have been supportive of allowing for them to attend experiences outside their district. Further, Joy explained this support is not only helpful, it is critical to her professional development, "I rely on [meetings] in the surrounding districts." Jennifer further explained, in the past, administrators have helped organize "common days" to meet with people from surrounding districts.

By organizing these opportunities, members of this focus group felt supported by administration in their professional development. Cohen and Goldhaber (2016) counted principals' ability to make "recommendations for finding resources or professional development opportunities" (p.11), among their list of ways leaders can build professional relationships with teachers. Associated with the ability to recommend professional development experiences is the need for principals to have keen awareness of teachers' classroom practices, professional goals, strengths, and areas in need of further development.

Focus group participants also described experiences when they felt staff professional development may not have supported their particular needs. Speaking again to the challenge of generalizing experiences for teachers, two participants expressed hours of teacher workshops aimed at acquiring continuing education credits can be frustrating when the content of the workshops does not clearly align with the classes they teach. These participants expressed understanding that they may have unique perspectives on this because of the subjects they teach. Unique perspectives, however, are noted by Weisberg et al. (2009), who explained the importance of administrators recognizing and supporting the different needs of their teachers. Doing so indicates strong leader-follower relationships and an awareness of the daily classroom experiences of teachers and students (Weisberg et al., 2009).

Trust and Leadership

Dean: "When someone is a trustworthy person, you will work harder for that person."

Explored in Chapter 2 are the differences and similarities of transformational and instructional leadership. Participants described experiences with their leaders that personify both types of leadership, further indicating educational leadership is indeed a union of transformational and instructional leadership, and qualities of both are critical in the development of trust between leaders and followers. Ranging from describing trust as the ability for leaders to keep private the sharing of personal information to trusting instructional feedback, how participants described the importance of trust in leader-follower relationships was diverse, complex, and, at times, rooted in previous experiences in former districts and with former administrators. The following section unravels the interdependent relationship of trust and leadership through the experiences and descriptions of case study participants.

The multifaceted definition of trust described in Chapter 1 and reviewed in this section represents the complexity of relationship-building within the real and perceived roles of leaders and followers in the field of education. When discussing trust, the characteristics described by study participants align with facets of trust highlighted in cited literature. Serving as the foundational definition of trust for the purposes of this study, Feltman (2009) defined trust as, "Choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to the actions of another" (p. 7). Participant examples of Feltman's (2009) definition of trust signaled a nod to instructional leadership characteristics described in Chapter 2, as study participants described an eagerness to invite their leaders into their classrooms and make vulnerable their teaching practices. This willingness to make vulnerable the actions of instruction indicate an existing trust within this school district, as teachers were both willing and desirous of leader engagement in classroom observations with the intention of providing feedback to teachers.

The findings of Handford and Leithwood (2012) and Tschannen-Moran (2013) aligned with Feltman (2009) and further expand on his definition of trust by highlighting additional trustworthy characteristics, such as: competence, reliability, and consistency. Study participants included specific references to these three trustworthy traits when discussing their experiences with leaders; what follows are participant descriptions that denote times when transformational leadership and instructional leadership are bound within lived experiences.

Participants described both the importance and complexity of competence in the form of subject-area knowledge. Awareness of competence emerged as participants were describing observation and feedback experiences with leaders. Further, focus group members agreed upon the need for leader competency in supporting teachers with student engagement and developmental behaviors. Lynn described an experience when students were struggling in class,

and she sought out administrative support to improve the situation. Three administrators responded to support requests. This particular experience underscores the importance of reliability, as participants referenced the need for immediate and reliable help in times of student learning interruptions.

Parallel to the work of Handford and Leithwood (2012) and Tschannen-Moran (2013), participants discussed consistency and transparency as necessary components of trust between leaders and followers. In the following experiences, transparency in communication intersects with the need for consistency among participants. Specifically, transparency and consistency were cited by participants when discussing administrative decisions about teacher professional development.

Four participants described confusion about leadership decisions surrounding attendance at state and national conferences. What followed was a conversation between the participants seeking clarity among one another about why one teacher may receive funding or support to attend conferences when others may not. Speculations addressed cost, location, timing, and experiential need. This conversation highlighted research findings linked to transformational leadership wherein Northouse (2016) listed transparency among predictability and reliability as three critical leadership qualities. Coupled with Tschannen-Moran's (2013) recognition that transparency and "openness" in communication are a necessity for trust-building, participants described real life experiences exhibiting their uncertainty about decision-making that had impacted their professional development.

Another component of trust described by Elizabeth was cited by Brown[3] (2018) as the quality of being a "vault." Elizabeth explained a foundation of trust between leaders and

[3] Brown (2018) described "vault" as not sharing "information or experiences that are not yours to share" (p. 225).

followers is the leader's ability to maintain privacy when confidential information is shared by teachers. Members of this focus group confirmed maintaining privacy is a critical component of trust and acknowledged its current existence between leaders and followers at their site.

The preceding paragraphs discussed ways in which teachers described choosing to place trust in their leaders. The next section provides focus group insights on leader-follower relationships and how leaders have expressed their trust in teachers. Solomon (2014) described how choice factors into trust-building, recognizing followers ultimately have the choice to give trust to their leaders. The previous paragraphs do show agreement with Solomon's (2014) description of choice and trust; the case study participants also described times when their leaders expressed trust in their teaching expertise. The following paragraphs emphasize a deepening complexity when considering how trust is understood among and between leaders and followers, as well as the impact of perceived trust on follower self-perception.

One group in particular focused on a collective feeling that their administrators trusted them to fulfill the requirements and expectations of their teaching jobs. Dean captured this sentiment by explaining, "We all agree that they trust us to do our jobs." Jennifer and Ellen further described how trust is important to their own self-efficacy in teaching. Ellen explained this in relationship to the infrequency of observations: "I think because they leave us alone, they trust us. I think absence is better proof of trust." Jennifer agreed with Ellen's position and was able to compare her current experiences with experiences in a different school district,

> I feel like it is okay that they do not come into my classroom all the time, because they trust that we will get our jobs done … I am trusted to be a professional. I haven't always had that at other places.

While the general sense from three focus group members was of appreciation for the trust they felt from their administrators to do their jobs, this theme was also contained within a larger conversational context, wherein participants agreed upon the need for more frequent feedback and increased presence in their classrooms.

The descriptions of trust provided by Ellen, Dean, and Jennifer speak to the complexity of developing trust between leaders and followers and how trust factors into feedback and professional development decisions. Their understanding of how limited or non-existent instructional feedback leads to feeling trusted to do their jobs, directly contrasts their colleagues' expressed desire for instructional feedback to support their professional development. Although seemingly conflicting ideas, both recognize an absence of instructional feedback can lead to conflicting effects on teachers: A desire for more feedback or a desire to be left alone. The beliefs expressed by Ellen, Dean, and Jennifer bring to light a potential concern with the absence of feedback: No feedback is also a form of feedback, but the intention is left to be interpreted by the teacher. Limited or non-existent feedback is absent of clear direction when it comes to realizing collective site goals or individual professional development.

COVID-19 and Trust Among Leaders and Followers

The emergence of COVID-19 in the spring of 2020 provided a unique insight into the development of trust in leader-follower relationships. Because COVID-19 had lasting impact on the individuals in this case study, I am choosing to include in this section participant feelings about the influence of the pandemic on their leader-follower relationships. In addition to the following three details shared by the participants, all shared the common experience of limited or non-existent instructional feedback in the months leading up to the focus group interviews. Teachers recognized the logistical challenges of providing instructional feedback while also

acknowledging building leadership did occasionally join virtual classes but not necessarily for the purpose of providing instructional feedback.

Participants also highlighted three experiences that link COVID-19 to the pursuance of trust in leader-follower relationships. All three experiences link to themes of reliability and transparency in communication and decision-making. Lynn indicated the need for leaders to make reliable decisions about returning to in-person teaching and learning. She expressed concern that decisions to return to in-person teaching and learning may not necessarily align with assurances made earlier in the year about returning to school only when infection rates are at a specific data point.

Jennifer indicated she feels trusted to make decisions to work from home when students are not in school. Focus group participants shared in this sentiment, acknowledging they know of colleagues in other districts who are required to work in school, even when students are not present. Jennifer explained, “I know of others who are required to return to school before students return to in-person, and it feels to them that they are not trusted to get their work done.” The final COVID-19 related experience links to transparency of communication during challenging times, locally and nationally. Dean felt some communication from leaders indicated a lack of trust in how teachers “approach students on various topics because of the world in which we live.”

Trust, Leadership, and Feedback

An observation that emerged from focus group interviews was that each participant distinguished professional development through their own experiential filter and professional values. Experiences in other districts, the influence of leaders and colleagues, unique subject areas, and respective worldviews all influence current perceptions on the utility of feedback from

leaders, the development of trust, and the influence of both on professional development decisions. All of these factors further emphasize the need for the development of strong leader-follower relationships wherein leaders understand teachers' experiences and have rich awareness of everyday classroom practices.

Data collected through participant stories expand upon current literature by providing insights into actual lived experiences with evaluation, feedback, and leader-follower relationships. Participants provided a deeper understanding of the necessity for teachers to receive instructional feedback, not only because it improves their practice, but also because it strengthens bonds of trust between leaders and followers, facilitates pedagogical direction, and helps direct collective professional development practices throughout the organization. In essence, providing intentional instructional feedback to teachers helps to align the instructional goals of an institution among administrators, teachers, and students. Dean captured the complex and symbiotic relationship between feedback, leadership, trust, and professional development when he explained:

> I think trust is a really big problem in education today. When you find an administrator that you can trust, your performance and your growth is definitely going to blossom. But when you are dealing with administration that you don't trust, that really affects you, and your students, and everybody. Lack of trust is a big problem.

Conclusion

This chapter described the lived experiences of teachers receiving instructional feedback, the development of trust in leader-follower relationships, and the influence of both on their professional development decisions. Throughout two focus group conversations, a number of themes fused into one overarching observation about the critical nature of strong leader-follower

relationships. Building strong relationships is a common theme in education; however, literature tends to focus on the need for teachers to build relationships with students in order to capitalize on student learning. As evidenced by participant perspectives, the strength of relationship-building does not only support teachers and students. Just as important in nurturing student learning outcomes, and arguably more so, is the development of robust working relationships between administrators and teachers.

Whether discussing the influence of past experiences on present instructional practices, the unique teaching landscape of each specific subject area, or preferred ways to receive appreciation, one clear idea emerged in these focus group interviews: Teachers expressed the need for their leaders to have elaborate understanding of who they are as people and as educators. This type of relationship can:

- Allow for the sharing of personal information with the assurance of privacy.
- Support the sharing of detailed feedback specific to courses taught and reflective of classroom culture.
- Encourage challenging conversations about instruction and suggestions for professional development.
- Establish a foundation of trust that supports cycles of feedback and professional development.

The next chapter describes how this study contributes to the field of education in practice as well as how it serves as a catalyst for future policy and scholarship.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Feedback, trust, and leadership are fundamental themes in the field of education. Discussions about any one of these topics naturally flow into the other two concepts. While often inseparable in conversation, the absence of even one concept in practice is felt by teachers and, indirectly, by students. Studies explored in abundance the themes of feedback, trust, and leadership in education; some even explore their influence on teacher professional development. However, scholarship is limited in describing the lived experiences of teachers who are navigating complex relationships with their leaders while navigating their own professional development to improve their instructional practices. Thus, seeking to expand upon existing literature, this study examined the complex relationships between administrators and teachers in order to advance discourse on influential factors contributing to teacher professional development that enhances student learning.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to:

1. Describe the professional development experiences of teachers from a school district in Greater Minnesota, with a focus on how feedback influences their professional development decisions.
2. Gain better understanding of the relationships between principals and teachers that foster effective systems of feedback.
3. Describe how trust between principals and teachers factors into the influence of instructional feedback and subsequent professional development decisions.

4. Finally, I describe how feedback, trust, and leadership provide a basis for professional development in order to make actionable recommendations for enhanced instructional practices aimed at advancing student learning.

Although a large body of scholarly work exists exploring the form, function, and effectiveness of teacher evaluation and feedback cycles, fewer studies describe the complex, lived experiences of teachers who are active participants in evaluative cycles. Similarly, scholars recognized the significance of frequent, formative feedback in teacher professional development; however, there exists few studies seeking ways to collaboratively engage with teachers in a realistic and sustainable manner. Further, ample literature represents the extensive study of collectively influential traits and qualities of educational leaders. However, there exists limited understanding of how exactly the quality of trust fortifies the impact of instructional feedback and teacher professional development. Thus, my hope with the findings and recommendations outlined in this paper is the provision of critical insight into the most influential factors in teacher professional development aimed at nurturing student learning. In this chapter, I summarize study findings, address implications for practice in the field, and recommend future research related to this topic.

Study Findings and Contributions to Current Literature

Grounding in Terminology

Focus group interviews provided rich qualitative data for a case study research design seeking to determine the roles feedback and leader-follower relationships play in teacher professional development. Participant experiences and perspectives provided insight into how teachers have engaged with leaders on instruction and professional development.

Feedback

I began focus group interviews by grounding the participants in the definition of feedback. Through frequent use in conversation and literature, dilution of the meaning of feedback and its significance to this study can occur. Fear of diluted meaning warranted a foundational grounding for participants and also warrants an additional grounding for readers in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. To begin, Wiggins (2012) explained: "Effective feedback requires that a person has a goal, takes action to achieve the goal, and receives goal-related information about his or her actions" (p. 11). Hattie and Clarke (2019) further emphasized feedback helps recipients know "where to go next" (p. 1), also recognizing feedback can inspire "… increased effort, motivation, or engagement to reduce the discrepancy between the current status and the goal" (Hattie & Clare, 2019, p. 3). What is prominent about these descriptions is the emphasis on the feedback recipient.

Comparatively, Stone and Heen (2014) distinguished early in their work that the key to effective feedback, "… is not the giver, but the receiver" (p. 3). Thus, scholars' descriptions of feedback reject the notion that the process of feedback involves someone with positional power providing insights to influence someone with less positional power. Reinforcing the concept of balanced power existing among leaders and followers, Brown (2018) stressed the person giving feedback should be as vulnerable as is the person receiving feedback. Shifting emphasis from the giver to the receiver transforms "… how we learn, lead, and behave in our professional roles and in our personal lives" (Stone & Heen, 2014, p. 3).

Trust and Leadership

This restructured lens through which we view feedback provides similar disruption to traditional concepts of trust and leadership. Elevating the role of the follower is not only significant when considering the process of giving and receiving feedback, scholarship indicated

trust, too, is something given to leaders by followers (Kellerman, 2012; Saphier, 2018; Solomon, 2014). Additional evidence emerged throughout the focus group interviews, as participants emphasized ways in which administrators' behavior and decisions can lead to diminished trust from followers to leaders. Burns (1978) and Hallinger (2003) suggested a reciprocal influence between leaders and followers. Northouse (2016) also acknowledged the simple reality that leaders cannot exist without followers. Thus, case study findings align with scholarship, suggesting that followers, not leaders, act as linchpins to feedback, trust, and leadership.

This is not to say leaders are void of impact or influence; neither literature nor case study participants find this to be true. However, this shift in perspective does emphasize the need for followers to better understand and embrace their power. Accompanying this awareness of power possessed by followers is a potential paradigm shift in the field of education. When leaders and followers fully understand their respective roles in the reciprocal process of feedback, the development of trust, and the influence of leader-follower relationships, then collaboration can lead to purposeful professional development.

Summary of Current Study

Focus group participants unintentionally drew conclusions about the importance of collaboration when describing the confluence of feedback, trust, and leadership. In their grappling with these three concepts and how each influence professional development decisions, the importance of relationships and collaboration emerged time and again as prevalent themes. The following section summarizes conclusions drawn from themes that emerged throughout the focus group interviews.

Feedback

To begin, findings suggest ideally teachers would receive feedback from leaders who know them as individuals, have subject-area knowledge, and have current or recent classroom teaching experience. The participants of this study expressed their understanding of the complex roles of administrators, acknowledging detailed, subject-specific feedback is challenging for administrators both by way of time commitment and instructional expertise. While empathetic to the time constraints that limited administrative presence in their classrooms, participants also acknowledged they were less likely to accept critical feedback from an administrator who had limited understanding of their students and curriculum.

Participants explained administrative presence leads to detailed awareness of students, classroom dynamics, and approaches to instruction. Lynn captured the significance of classroom observations by explaining, "If administrators do not understand the culture of the classroom, then they may not understand why teachers are making instructional decisions when planning." Elizabeth built upon Lynn's assertion when explaining infrequent observations and limited feedback makes it more challenging to accept feedback when it is given, expressing that she has often felt like "[administrators] don't even know me."

These findings support existing literature (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016; Fink & Markholdt, 2013) that emphasizes the need for administrators to understand quality instruction, pedagogy, and build strong interpersonal relationships with teachers in order to guide professional development. Furthermore, these findings expand upon existing literature by emphasizing the role of the teacher in the feedback process, as participants explained a reduced likelihood of accepting feedback from someone who does not know them, their curriculum, or their classroom culture.

Professional Development

Next, participants explored experiences with professional development, focusing on how administrators can and do support their work. Frequently cited by participants was the importance of administrative support in holding space for, financially funding, and helping organize professional development that directly applies to their subject area. While participants found it less likely that administrators directly influenced their instructional practices due to time constraints and lack of experience in their respective instructional areas, they did recognize there are additional approaches administrators can do and take to help them with their professional development. These experiences support research (Robinson, 2008) that suggests one role administrators have in facilitating teacher professional development is to strategically provide resources that support instructional practices. Experiences cited by participants expands upon existing research by emphasizing that administrators are best equipped to provide relevant and timely resources when actively engaged in teachers' courses and curriculum.

Trust

Finally, the focus group participants described the complex nature of trust through which several findings emerged on the development of trust between teachers and administrators. Some participants spoke of the trust they have in their leaders, and others spoke of how they perceive their leaders to trust them. Each respective conversation provided unique insights into how teachers think about trust in the workplace. The only common ground between these conversations was the fragile nature of this reciprocal relationship.

Findings about participant trust in their leaders illuminate characteristics such as: transparency in communication, clarity on instructional goals, frequent presence in classrooms, and the ability to maintain confidentiality when entrusted with private information.

Most noteworthy about this conversation was the clear desire of teachers for administrators to join participant classrooms. This willingness to make vulnerable the actions of their classrooms and their instructional practices aligns with Feltman's (2009) definition of trust as "Choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to the actions of another" (p. 7). Numerous participants were unquestionably willing to risk the vulnerability of teacher observations in order to gain instructional feedback.

Furthermore, participants discussed perceptions of trust administrators have in them. This conclusion, perhaps more than others, highlights the complexity surrounding the development of trust between leaders and followers. In direct contrast to sentiments expressed in the other focus group, this group of participants discussed how the absence of instructional feedback led them to believe their administrators trusted them to do their jobs. While administrators may very well trust teachers to do their jobs, these ideas represent what can happen in the absence of feedback; interpretations may not align with intent. Participants further described experiences when they felt micromanaged by former administrators, thus welcoming the "hands off" approach of their current administration when it came to curriculum and instruction. They did appreciate administrative presence in their classrooms and acknowledged that often administrators struggle in providing them instructional feedback because of the specialty areas they taught. As a result, the consensus of this focus group was "no new is good news" but administrative presence is always welcome.

One additional conclusion that emerges from participant experiences is how unclear or nonexistent communication can yield unintended results. As described in Chapter 4, Paul expressed reservations about general, appreciation feedback without details specific to his instruction. These feelings of reservation result in a lack of awareness about how to act on this

feedback, and, consequently, an unwillingness to accept this type of feedback. This is likely an unintended consequence, which could also be said about how focus group participants interpret nonexistent feedback. Both instances speak to the need for transparency in communication between leaders and followers, as emphasized by Northouse (2016).

Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic

It must be noted this research study was conducted as the COVID-19 pandemic spread throughout the United States and world, impacting school systems and the daily experiences of educators. While participants discussed the immediate impact of COVID-19 on relationships with their leaders, lasting impact remains unclear. Some educators expressed concern that inconsistent messaging has led to reduced trust. Others indicated appreciation for flexibility in workday expectations. Flexibility ranged from the reduced amount of time spent in the school building to whether or not teachers were required to submit lesson plans while shifting teaching and learning models between distance, hybrid, and in-person. At the conclusion of the research study, COVID-19 was still complicating school systems, thus its long-lasting impact on professional relationships remains unknown.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

The following section outlines recommendations for local leaders to put into practice. As explained earlier in this chapter, there exists more equalized power between administrators and teachers than originally understood. Thus, I use the term “local leaders” to describe both administrators and teachers.

One of the most substantial findings in this paper is the incompatible nature of teacher evaluation and professional development. Teachers may be willing to be vulnerable about their instructional limitations with a leader whose main function is to help them improve. However,

these same teachers may find it challenging to trust exposing their potential weaknesses to a leader when it may lead to their dismissal (Popham, 2013). Noted in scholarly research (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.; Marzano, 2012; Popham, 2013; Scholastic Inc., 2013; Weisberg et al., 2009; Wise et al., 1984) and supported in the experiences of the focus groups participants, the current nature of evaluative feedback does little to inform teacher professional development decisions. Infrequency of feedback and lack of trust were most often cited as the reasons evaluative feedback lacked relevance and proved stagnant. Both elements are complex in their own right, but there are foundational practices that can build trust between teachers and administrators and lead to collaborative practices that result in more frequent feedback.

My first recommendation requires administrators and teachers to begin with the development of authentic relationships. This recommendation aligns with existing literature (Leithwood et al., 2013) that suggests the most high-performing organizations are led by individuals who create cultures of high trust and "develop, nurture, and model trusting and authentic relationships" (p. 263). Elements of trust, such as consistency, reliability, and competence (Handford & Leithwood, 2012; Tschannen-Moran, 2013) are the result of clarity and openness about respective roles and responsibilities. The more awareness administrators have of teachers' experiences, current goals, and classroom practices, the easier it is to join classes, provide ideas for professional development, and support what teachers need to perform their job responsibilities. Likewise, the more clarity teachers have of administrator experiences, job responsibilities, and pedagogical philosophies, the easier it is for teachers to seek feedback, ask for support, and engage in challenging conversations that keep open lines of communication.

As a catalyst for the deepening of authentic relationships, a further recommendation is for administrators and teachers to engage in collaborative instructional experiences, such as

curriculum development, instruction, and professional development. Focus group participants cited collaborative experiences with administrators as the most influential to their professional development. Collaborative experiences provide opportunities to align individual practices to collective goals. Additionally, participants cited collaborative experiences as the moments when they were most clear on site-based instructional goals. Collaboration and clarity of goals align with a theme in Chapter 2 that emphasized the importance of a school culture that supports leader-follower relationships focused on the pursuit of common goals (Ciulla, 2014).

Feedback to All Learners

My next recommendation emphasizes the necessity of feedback to all learners: leaders and followers, adults, and students. Noteworthy to this study is scholarship about the effect of feedback on student learning. Hattie and Clarke (2019) explained feedback is one of the most effective practices teachers can use to influence student learning. Effective feedback methods for students mirror the highlighted findings in this paper about feedback to teachers. It is not surprising that what is good for students is good for teachers. However, Hattie (2019) explained the most important feedback for learning is that which students give to their teachers, calling attention to another insight raised by literature and study participants: The critical influence of followers on the actions of the leaders.

As I have unraveled the interconnected themes of this dissertation and now seek to fuse them back together, one constant is the coexistence of feedback and trust in all learning relationships. Further, while adult professional development is a focus of this paper, an undercurrent has been the goal of better understanding teacher professional development for the purpose of guiding student learning. While describing the process of feedback with students, Hattie (2019), emphasized themes that emerge throughout this study.

> Who gives the feedback, whether it is task or ego related, and how and whether it is received and acted upon are all factors in its effectiveness. This last point is particularly pertinent: more attention needs to be given to whether and how students receive and act upon the feedback, as there seems little point in maximizing the amount and nature of feedback given if it is not received or understood. (Hattie & Clarke, 2019, p. 5)

Hattie and Clarke (2019) touched on the who, the what, and the how of feedback cooperatively influencing the ability of the recipient to act upon it. Thus, though research and study participants did emphasize the utility of frequent feedback, even more influential is the relationship between the feedback giver and receiver as well as the clarity of "where to next." Strength in leader-follower relationships and clarity on instructional goals indicated a return to the guiding principles of transformational and instructional leadership described in Chapter 2.

The corresponding experiences of administrator-teacher relationships and teacher-student relationships in relationship to the impact of receiving feedback is understandable, as teaching is a profession analogous with lifelong learning. Of course, best practices for adult learners so closely parallel instructional methods that are also highly effective for learners all along the developmental continuum. Thus, my recommendation for practitioners is that of both providing frequent, formative instructional feedback and asking for frequent, formative instructional feedback.

Teacher and Principal Preparation Programs

My final recommendations for practice is aimed at intentionally focusing on the reciprocal action of giving and receiving feedback and exploring the many facets of trust building between leaders and followers in teacher and principal preparation programs. A significant finding in this study is the shared responsibility of feedback cycles and the

development of relationships built on trust for teachers and principals. Research and participant experiences indicate teachers possess the most power when choosing to utilize instructional feedback received from administrators (Brown, 2018; Stone & Heen, 2014), and teachers also possess power when choosing to trust their principals (Kellerman, 2012; Saphier, 2018; Solomon, 2014). As new, non-tenured teachers, the dynamics of this relationship can be easily misaligned, in part due to teacher evaluations, a practice yielding questionable results for even the most experienced teachers, as discussed throughout this paper in research and in data from focus group interviews.

Therefore, it seems plausible that teacher and principal preparation programs explicitly address effective systems of feedback, including the roles of both the teacher and the principal in non-evaluative, formative feedback cycles. Further, programs that explore types of leadership would also be well-served to engage in explicit discussion of the how trust is built between leaders and followers. Teachers and principals, at the precipice of their careers, can only benefit from being taught about their dynamic roles in feedback and in developing interpersonal relationships in a manner that propagates trust and shared responsibility for professional growth.

Implications and Recommendations for Policy

In order to guide local policy decisions regarding teacher professional development decisions, my singular recommendation is for school leaders to engage in a collaborative design of professional development experiences aimed at unifying principals and teachers around instructional goals to advance student learning. National guidance as outlined in Title II: Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals (Every Child Succeeds Act, 2015) as well as Minnesota State Statute Sections 122A.60 and 122A.61 focus on the professional development of teachers. Additionally, Minnesota Statute Sections 122A.40 and

122A.41 provide requirements for teacher evaluation. All recognize the need for high quality teacher professional development. National and state guidance puts responsibility on local school districts to create evaluation systems and professional development experiences support effective teaching practices ensuring student learning. However, there is a gap in what is expected through policy and what is being done in practice.

While national and state policy exist to guide local school districts, there lacks collective awareness of the challenges faced by school leaders in providing sustainable feedback and professional development practices that influence change and promise progress. The work of this study was to better understand how local leaders can guide and accomplish this critical work. A starting point in addressing local policy is bringing together administrators and teachers to collaboratively design a system where all parties are empowered, roles are understood, and goals are clear. A co-created system of feedback that stimulates professional development must be built upon leader-follower relationships bound by trust, transparency, and collective goals.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Scholarship

Localized Action Research

My first recommendation for future scholarship is widening the scope of study when seeking to understand lived experiences of teachers. Qualitative research provides the necessary next steps in truly understanding and building upon what is already known about the complex relationships between leaders and followers in the field of education. Additional research must continue to examine teacher and administrator experiences, beliefs, and job responsibilities. The interviews conducted in this study strongly suggest that the first step in building relationships is for people to be authentically heard and seen. Seeing, listening, and understanding can be studied as formal scholarly research. However, leaders can also informally engage in conversations with

teachers with the goal of understanding one another's expertise, goals, and needs. As practitioners, educational leaders can engage in their own action research within their respective schools by seeking to understand the lived experiences of their teachers and observing how, in doing so, relationships develop in a manner that supports feedback, deepens trust, and strengthens professional development experiences and outcomes.

Seeking Diverse Perspectives

A further recommendation in regard to inclusivity of more educator experiences requires understanding the complex relationships between leaders and followers on a larger scale. The wide variety of focus group experiences and perspectives indicate a need to learn more about the lived experiences of teachers beyond the scope of this study. Seeking to understand teacher experiences in a qualitative manner only promises to shed more light on the development of trust between leaders and followers as well as the utility of feedback on professional development. I recommend expanding upon this study by seeking data from educators with wide-ranging experience in urban, suburban, and rural school districts. The size of school districts and the ratio of administrators to teachers can influence depth of relationships and frequency of feedback.

Similarly, I recommend intentionally studying the development of trust between leaders and followers among people diverse in identity and ethnic background. How trust is formed may certainly be different among more diverse combinations of leaders and followers and with consideration of implications surrounding power dynamics. For instance, one observation I made during focus group interviews involved who was most comfortable openly expressing frustration with current systems of feedback in this school district. While the two focus groups consisted of two men and eight women, the two participants who identify as male spoke most often and most critically. One woman admittedly gave the speaking power to her male colleague, stating,

"Thank goodness you are here; you explain things so well." A deeper understanding of how power has influenced systems, policies, and the individual voices of teachers and leaders certainly warrants further study into leader-follower relationships and individual and collective efficacy of a staff.

Administrative Perspectives

The literature review and case study central to this dissertation sought to describe experiences with feedback, trust, and professional development from the perspectives of teachers. My next recommendation for future scholarship includes studying the lived experiences of school leaders as another critical perspective to consider when trying to improve cycles of feedback, deepen trust between leaders and followers, and provide influential professional development. Delving into the leadership styles, roles, responsibilities, and personal beliefs of administrators will ensure the continuation of this conversation among school leaders and increase potential for lasting change within school districts, as leaders have the positional power to set and commit to goals in a manner that heavily influences professional development for teachers and student learning.

Non-Tenured Teachers

Next, I recommend studying the influence of feedback, development of trust, and their cumulative impact on teacher professional development with non-tenured teaching staff. My work focused on tenured, secondary teachers and their experiences with feedback, trust, and professional development. Focus group participants openly discussed how their experiences as first and second year teachers vastly differed from current experiences shared within the context of my study. Thus, the first years of teaching are rife with opportunity to study the influence of feedback, the development of trust, and the pursuance of professional development. Further,

understanding the development of trust, influence of feedback, and professional development decisions of teachers early in their careers will help inform leaders about the foundational aspects of the profession critical in supporting teacher retention.

Variety of Feedback Sources

My final scholarship recommendation indicates a need for studying effective feedback from various sources. The focus of this paper was on feedback from school leaders. Experience and focus group perspectives made clear that feedback can also come from students, colleagues, and those with the sole purpose of providing non-evaluative feedback, such as instructional coaches. Although extensive feedback is critical in professional development, more scholarship is needed to investigate the most effective approaches to differing forms of feedback, as well as a focus on how teachers react to the different sources. If administrative roles do not allow for the time or background to provide specific, frequent instructional feedback, seeking feedback from alternative or additional sources is a plausible solution. However, just as participants expressed the complexity of building trust and engaging in feedback cycles with administrators, these factors also apply to engaging in feedback cycles from other sources.

Conclusion

"We are not thinking machines that feel, we are feeling machines that think."

-Antonio R Damasio, Professor of Neuroscience, Psychology, and Philosophy

On a rainy, Friday afternoon in April 2015, I took the first step in a doctoral program with the goal of better understanding the bigger picture of educational leadership and the intersection of leadership and teacher professional development. More comfortable with even the remotest semblance of a plan, I was filled with hope, believing the next few years would be spent learning about leadership and intricately studying feedback and its impact on professional

development. What I did not expect was that a parallel journey would occur in my professional life, as my career took turns often aligning with my coursework.

In reflection, my professional life played out as human-centered action research of my doctoral studies. Feedback became central to my research and my career, as my position as an instructional coach involved the giving of instructional feedback and also the seeking of feedback about my own practice. The centrality of feedback to my daily life was even less surprising than the persistent reminder of the critical nature of trust with and in my colleagues. Leadership and feedback alone do not lead one to professional development; trust, something much less tangible and much more complex, is required to provide a foundation for professional decision-making.

I became increasingly cognizant of the presence or absence of trust in every interaction. Further, I continued to refine my leadership skills by putting action to research—building trust through consistency, reliability, and transparency. I sought to understand my colleagues more, and I moved in closer when I felt trust diminishing. This latter approach inspired by Brené Brown's (2014) assertion: "People are hard to hate close up. Move in" (p. 63). It was through the lens of a practitioner, suspended somewhere between teachers and administrators, that I observed the personification of trust, leadership, and professional development. It was also through this lens that I observed the profession of teaching and the influence of leaders on the work done daily in schools. I watched research come to life. And one stark observation was this: Neither the field of education nor our students can afford the absence of feedback, trust, or purposeful professional development among adult leaders.

I have spent the past five chapters:

- Exploring what is known about feedback, leadership, and trust in the field of education.
- Describing the lived experiences of teachers in relationship to feedback, leadership, trust, and their combined influence on professional development.
- Untangling feedback, leadership, and trust to better understand their isolated significance.
- And weaving these concepts back together with renewed determination to strengthen their collective power on teacher professional development.

These steps are critical in research and analysis. However, in practice, the absence of any one of these elements is most often experienced through feelings rather than thoughts. Thus, I am reminded of this moment in Chapter 2: "Leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good" (Ciulla, 2014, p.15). In Chapter 2, Ciulla's (2014) words were a steppingstone in building a foundation of research for the work of this study. In Chapter 5, Ciulla's (2014) emphasis on emotions, trust, commitment, and relationships offers an important reminder that people are at the center of this work. My hope is this study provides forward momentum in deeply humanizing the roles of administrators and teachers, thus contributing to an atmosphere where individual professional development leads to collective efficacy.

References

Academic Improvement and Teacher Quality Programs. (2006). *Improving teacher quality state grants: ESEA Title II, Part A* [Non-Regulatory Guidance]. United States Department of Education. https://www2.ed.gov/programs/teacherqual/guidance.pdf

American Institutes for Research. (2009). *State and local implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act* (ED-01-CO-0026/0024). Government Printing Office.

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Scholastic Inc. (2013). *Primary sources: America's teachers on teaching in an era of change* (ED562664). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED562664.pdf

Boyce, J., & Bowers, A. J. (2018). Toward an evolving conceptualization of instructional leadership as leadership for learning: Meta-narrative review of 109 quantitative studies across 25 years. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *56*(2), 161–182. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-06-2016-0064

Brown, B. (2017). *Braving the wilderness: The quest for true belonging and the courage to stand alone* (1st ed.). Random House.

Brown, B. (2018). *Dare to lead: Brave work. Tough conversations. Whole hearts* (1st ed.). Random House.

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership* (1st ed.). Harper and Row.

Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2003). School leadership: Concepts and evidence. *National College for School Leadership*, 1–42. https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5119/14/dok217-eng-School_Leadership_Concepts_and_Evidence_Redacted.pdf

Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2014). School leadership models: What do we know? *School Leadership & Management*, *34*(5), 553–571. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2014.928680

Cherasaro, T., Brodersen, M., Reale, M., & Yanoski, D. (2016, November 1). Teachers' responses to feedback from evaluators: What feedback characteristics matter? *National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance*, 1–24. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/central/pdf/REL_2017190.pdf

Ciani, K., Summers, J., & Easter, M. (2008). A ‘‘top-down’’ analysis of high school teacher motivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 33*(4), 533–560. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2007.04.002

Ciulla, J. B. (2014a). *Ethics, the heart of leadership* (3rd ed.). Praeger.

Ciulla, J. B. (2014b). Leadership ethics: Expanding the territory. In J. B. Ciulla (Ed.), *Ethics, the heart of leadership* (3rd ed., pp. 3–31). Praeger.

Cogan, M. (1973). *Clinical supervision*. Houghton Mifflin.

Cohen, J., & Goldhaber, D. (2016, June 1). Building a more complete understanding of teacher evaluation using classroom observations. *Educational Researcher*, *45*(6), 378–387. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X16659442

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Danielson, C. (2007). *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching* (2nd ed.). ASCD.

Danielson, C. (2010, December 1). Evaluations that help teachers learn. *Educational Leadership*, *68*(4), 35–39. https://doi.org/EJ913793.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2014). One piece of the whole: Teacher evaluation as part of a comprehensive system for teaching and learning. *American Educator*, *38*(1), 4–13. https://doi.org/EJ1023870.

Donohoo, J. (2018). Collective teacher efficacy research: Productive patterns of behaviour and other positive consequences. *Journal of Educational Change, 19*, 323–345. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-018-9319-2

Donohoo, J., Hattie, J., & Eels, R. (2018). The power of collective efficacy. *Educational Leadership*, *75*(6), 40–44. http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar18/vol75/num06/The-Power-of-Collective-Efficacy.aspx

Edmonds, R. (1978). *A discussion of the literature and issues related to effective schooling*. CEMREL.

Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6301 (2015). https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf

Exec. Order No. 20-01, 3 C.F.R. 1 (2020). https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp?id=1055-422959#:~:text=Declaring%20a%20Peacetime%20Emergency%20and,Protect%20Minnesotans%20from%20COVID%2D19.

Feltman, C. (2009). *The thin book of trust: An essential primer for building trust a work*. Thin Book.

Fink, S., & Markholt, A. (2013). The leader's role in developing teacher expertise. In M. Grogan (Ed.), *The Jossey-Bass Reader on educational leadership* (3rd ed., pp. 317–333). Jossey-Bass.

Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2019). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (10th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

Gardner, J. (1990). *On leadership*. Free Press.

Goldhammer, R. (1969). *Clinical supervision: Special methods for the supervision of teachers*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Goodwin, J., & Babo, G. (2014, October 1). What expert teachers think: A look at principal leadership behaviors that facilitate exemplary classroom instructional practice. *Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research*, *1*(2), 65–84. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1105727

GovTrack.us. (2021). H.R. 1532 –112th Congress: Race to the Top Act of 2011. https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/112/hr1532

Hallinger, P. (1992, March 1). The evolving role of American principals from managerial to instructional to transformational leaders. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *30*(3), 35–48. https://www.deepdyve.com/lp/emerald-publishing/the-evolving-role-of-american-principals-from-managerial-to-y5jhujmnRd?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=batchRecsEmail&utm_source=batchRecsEmail&loginPrompt=true.

Hallinger, P. (2003, November 1). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *33*(3), 329–351. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764032000122005.

Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. F. (2013). Running on empty? Finding the time and capacity to lead learning. *NASSP Bulletin*, *97*(1), 5–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636512469288.

Handford, V., & Leithwood, K. (2012). Why teachers trust school leaders. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *51*(2), 194–212. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231311304706.

Hattie, J. (2015, February 1). High impact leadership. *Educational Leadership*, *72*(5), 36–40. http://www.ascd.org.ezproxy.csp.edu/publications/educational_leadership/feb15/vol72/num05/High-Impact_Leadership.aspx.

Hattie, J., Clarke, S., & Hattie, J. A. (2019). *Visible learning*. Routledge.

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007, March 1). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, *77*(1), 81–112. https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487.

Hattie, J., & Zierier, K. (2018). *10 Mindframes for visible learning: Teaching for success*. Routledge.

Hill, H., & Grossman, P. (2013, July 1). Learning from teacher observations: Challenges and opportunities posed by new teacher evaluation systems. *Harvard Educational Review*, *83*(2), 371–384. https://doi.org/10.17763

Hunter, M. (1980, February 1). Six types of supervisory conferences. *Educational Leadership*, *37*(5), 408–412. https://doi.org/EJ216062.

Kellerman, B. (2012). *The end of leadership*. HarperCollins.

Khachatryan, E. (2015). Feedback on teaching from observations of teaching: What do administrators say and what do teachers think about it? *NASSP Bulletin*, *99*(2), 164–188. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636515583716.

Leithwood, K. (2005). *Educational leadership: A review of the research*. Laboratory for Student Success (LSS), The Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory. http://www.temple.edu/lss.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Strauss, T. (2013). How to reach high performance. In M. Grogan (Ed.), *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership* (3rd ed., pp. 255–273). Jossey-Bass.

Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. The Wallace Foundation.

Leithwood, K., & Seashore-Louis, K. (2011). *Linking leadership to student learning* [VitalSource Bookshelf]. https://online.vitalsource.com/#/books/9781118132265/

Marzano, R. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. http://www.ocmboces.org/tfiles/folder1608/21responsibilitiesschoolleader.pdf

Marzano, R. (2012, November 1). The two purposes of teacher evaluation. *Educational Leadership*, *70*(3), 14–19. http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/nov12/vol70/num03/The-Two-Purposes-of-Teacher-Evaluation.aspx.

Marzano, R. J., Frontier, T., & Livingston, D. (2011). *Effective supervision: Supporting the art and science of teaching* (6th ed.). ASCD.

Mason, J. (2017). *Qualitative researching* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.

Meyer, F., Le Fevre, D. M., & Robinson, V. M. (2017). How leaders communicate their vulnerability: implications for trust building. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *31*(2), 221–235. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-11-2015-0150

National Council on Teacher Quality. (2013). *Minnesota evaluation and observation frequency*. https://www.nctq.org/statePolicy/2015/stateFindings.do?policyIssueId=6&masterGoalId=10&stateId=24&yearId=9&x=30&y=9

Minnesota Legislature. (2020a). *122A.60 STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.* 2020 Minnesota Statutes. https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/122A.60

Minnesota Legislature. (2020b). *Employment, Contracts, Termination sec. 122a.40 mn statutes*. 2020 Minnesota Statutes. https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/122A.40

National Education Association. (2016). *National Education Association Policy Statements 2016-2017* [Policy Statement]. https://ra.nea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Policy-Statements_2017.pdf

No child left behind act of 2001. 107 P.L.110. 115 Stat. 1425, 2002 Enacted H.R.1. (2002).

Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7th ed.). SAGE.

Ozdemir, G., Sahin, S., & Ozturk, N. (2020). Teachers' self-efficacy perceptions in terms of school principal's instructional leadership behaviours. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, *16*(1), 25–40.

Popham, J. W. (2013, March 1). On serving two masters: Formative and summative teacher evaluation. *Principal Leadership*, *13*(7), 18–22. http://www.nassp.org/Content/158/PLmar13_popham.pdf

Reinhorn, S. K., Johnson, S. M., & Simon, N. S. (2017, September 1). Investing in development: Six high-performing, high-poverty schools implement the Massachusetts teacher evaluation policy. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *39*(3), 383–406. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373717690605

Robinson, V. (2011). Three capabilities for student-centered leadership. In M. Grogan (Ed.), *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership* (3rd ed., pp. 297–316). Jossey-Bass.

Robinson, V. M. (2010, January 21). From instructional leadership to leadership capabilities: Empirical findings and methodological challenges. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *9*(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700760903026748

Robinson, V. M., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008, December 1). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership styles. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *44*(5), 635–674. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08321509

Ross, D. J., & Cozzens, J. A. (2016, September 1). The Principalship: Essential core competencies for instructional leadership and its impact on school climate. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, *4*(9), 162–176. https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v4i9.1562

Shatzer, R. H., Caldarella, P., Hallam, P. R., & Brown, B. L. (2014). Comparing the effects of instructional and transformational leadership on student achievement: Implications for practice. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *42*(4), 445–459. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213502192

Solomon, R. C. (2014). Emotions and trust: Beyond "charisma." In J. B. Ciulla (Ed.), *Ethics, the heart of leadership* (3rd ed., pp. 104–125). Praeger.

Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. The Guilford Press.

Stone, D., & Heen, S. (2014). *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well*. Penguin Group.

Tschannen-Moran, M. (2013). Becoming a trustworthy leader. In M. Grogan (Ed.), *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership* (3rd ed., pp. 40–54). Jossey-Bass.

U.S. Department of Education. (2004, September 15). *Title ii - Preparing, training, and recruiting high quality teachers and principals*. https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg20.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2009). *Race to the Top program executive summary*. https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf

Valentine, J. W., & Prater, M. (2011). Instructional, transformational, and managerial leadership and student achievement: High school principals making a difference. *NASSP Bulletin*, *95*(1), 5–30. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636511404062

Weisberg, D., Sexton, S., Mulhern, J., & Keeling, D. (2009). The widget effect: Our national failure to acknowledge and act on differences in teacher effectiveness. The New Teacher Project Website. https://tntp.org/publications/view/evaluation-and-development/the-widget-effect-failure-to-act-on-differences-in-teacher-effectiveness

Wiggins, G. (2012, September 12). Seven keys to effective feedback. *Educational Leadership*, *70*, 10–16.

Wise, A. E., Darling-Hammond, L., McLaughlin, M. W., & Bernstein, H. T. (1984). *Teacher evaluation: A study of effective practices* (National Institute of Education R-3139-NIE). Rand Corporation Website. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2006/R3139.pdf

Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research: Design and method* (6th ed.) Sage.

Appendix A: Letter of Introduction and Invitation to Participate in Study

Hello _____,

I hope you are well. You are receiving this letter as the district leaders of X secondary schools to invite your participation and ask your permission to include your school district in a study related to feedback and teacher professional development. The purpose of the study is to understand the role feedback plays in teacher decision-making surrounding their professional development. This study is being conducted as part of my doctoral studies and will be presented in my dissertation.

The goals of the study are to understand participant experiences as secondary teachers receiving feedback on instruction and as teachers electing to engage in professional development. Specifically, I will ask study participants about their decisions following instructional feedback cycles and what factors most influence their engagement with professional development.

There are no anticipated risks to participating in this research study. I recognize the potential position of vulnerability this study could place on participating teachers. With this in mind, please know that your district's identity and the identity of participants will be protected through the use of pseudonyms in any documents relating to the study as well as the paper wherein I will present the findings of the study. Furthermore, participating teachers will be asked to review study findings in order to make certain that representation of their ideas are accurate and absent of identifying personal characteristics. Participation in this study is voluntary.

Information resulting from this study may benefit others now and in the future as the researcher learns more about forms of feedback that foster teacher professional development. Further, the results of this study may help those with integral roles in curriculum and instruction to make decisions regarding professional development experiences for teachers in their district. Finally, the results of this study may help clarify for teachers their respective agency in their professional development decisions.

If you approve of me conducting my study at X Secondary Schools, please kindly sign below and return to me at my included email address. Alternatively, you are welcome to submit a letter of permission on your institution's letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct my study in your district.

My deep appreciation for your consideration in participating in this study. Please know I am happy to connect with you at any time to address questions or concerns. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Stefanie Whitney, Researcher
Concordia University, St. Paul whitneys@csp.edu

Dr. Frederick Dressen, Dissertation Chair, Concordia University, St. Paul

Approved by:

_____ Date: _____

Please print your name here:

_____

Appendix B: IRB Approval Form

Study Number: 2020_119
Principal Investigator: Stefanie Whitney
Title: The Space Between Feedback and Growth: A Qualitative Study on Teacher Reactions to Instructional Feedback

Classification: __X__ Exempt ___Expedited ___ Full Review

Approved __X__

Approved with modifications: ____ [See attached]

Declined ____ [See attached]

Upon receipt of this letter, you may begin your research. Please remember that any changes in your protocol need to be approved through the IRB Committee. When projects are terminated or completed, the IRB Committee should be informed in order to comply with Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Regulations, Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46 (45 CFR 46). If you have questions, please call the IRB Chair at (651) 641-8723.

Stephen Ross
Signature, Chair Human Subjects Review Committee

December 31, 2020
Date

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, ST. PAUL
Informed Consent for a Research Study

You are invited to participate in this research study entitled: A Qualitative Case Study on Teacher Response to Instructional Feedback. This study is being conducted by Stefanie Whitney, a doctoral student at Concordia University, St. Paul. Below I am including answers to questions that may arise as a participant in this study. Please read through this document and ask any additional questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

Why is this researcher doing this study?

The continuously evolving role of teachers in the American education system requires a comprehensive awareness of pedagogical, social, emotional, and cultural best practices. As an educator, it can be unclear how one should go about engaging in the inexhaustible field of professional development. School districts may provide support in established district initiatives, schools may provide support on building initiatives, and individuals may seek growth opportunities through local, state, and national conferences. There are limitless opportunities for professional development. Literature indicates that teachers look to building leaders as sources of guidance in their individual professional growth. Thus, a critical question to then consider is: What roles do instructional leaders have in initiating and advancing collective professional growth with their teaching staff?

This study seeks to describe the professional development experiences of teachers with a focus on how feedback influences their professional development decisions. Further, I aim to describe how trust factors into the engagement of teachers with their instructional leaders. With this in mind, I seek to understand how trust factors into the impact of instructional feedback and consequent professional development decisions. The study centers on the experiences of teachers and asks the following questions:

1. How would you describe effective instructional feedback?
2. How has instructional feedback impacted your professional development decisions?

Why have I been asked to be in this study?
Participants selected for this study are secondary, tenured teachers in a Minnesota school district. Inclusion criteria for this study include teachers who have tenure in their current school district and who teach in grades 6-12.

If I decide to participate in this study, what will I be asked to do?

If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Participate in semi-structured, focus group interviews with your professional learning team within the next two months. Each interview will last between 45-60 minutes. Interviews will be conducted over Google Meets or Microsoft Teams and will be recorded to ensure clarity and accuracy.

2. You may also be invited to engage in a 1:1 interview as a follow-up to the focus group when clarification or additional time is needed.

What if I decide I don't want to be in this study?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate in this study, simply inform me and do not sign this form. You also have the opportunity to change your mind, should you decide at a later date that you do not want to participate in this study. You may withdraw from this study at any point; however, once data has been collected and synthesized into larger themes, withdrawing your interview data will not be possible because this data then informs the overall analysis. Your decision on whether or not to participate in this study will not have a negative or positive impact on your relationship with Concordia University or your school district.

What are the potential risks to me in participating in this study?

There are minimal risks to you as a participant in this study. I do understand that the topics of conversation can put participants in a vulnerable position; you do reserve the right to refrain from answering a question(s) or to request a 1:1 conversation should these options be more appealing.

What potential benefits may happen if I participate in this study?

While this study offers no direct benefits to the study participants, indirect benefits may include a shift in policies and procedures surrounding teacher feedback cycles, professional development experiences, and teacher agency in their professional development.

What will you do with information acquired from me and how will you protect my privacy?

When writing up the study findings, I will only use pseudonyms for participants, your school, and your district. I will use these pseudonyms throughout my writing process, including interview transcripts, memos, and study findings. I will delete video recordings, audio recordings, and meeting transcripts as soon as interviews are transcribed. All digital data will be kept in password protected files on my password protected personal computer. I will keep one password-protected document that has real names aligned with pseudonyms, which will be deleted once the study is complete.

Could my information be used for later research?

Your data will not be used for future research without first gaining consent from you.

Will there be possible changes to the study?

If, throughout the course of the study, information arises that may impact your willingness to participate in the study, I will notify you so you can make an informed decision about remaining in or withdrawing from the study.

How can I get more information about this study?

If you have additional questions, please reach out at any time. I can be reached at: whitneys@csp.edu. If you have other questions or concerns regarding this study, and you would prefer not to discuss them with the researcher, you are welcome to contact Dissertation Chair, Dr. Ric Dressen, at dressen@csp.edu.

Statement of Consent

I consent to participate in this study and agree to be video and audio recorded.
My signature indicates that I have read this document, have my questions answered, and I am at least 18 years of age:

Signature of Participant Date

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Researcher Date