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Distributed Leadership and the Development of a Collaborative School Culture

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Distributed Leadership and the Development of a Collaborative School Culture

by

John Barnes Stubblefield

MA, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2008

BS, High Point University, 1999

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2019

Abstract

Demands for increased school accountability created by No Child Left Behind and Every Student Succeeds legislation has resulted in the implementation of professional development programs in which educators are observers rather than collaborative participants. The problem at a secondary independent charter school in Central Ohio was the lack of a collaborative culture in which teachers and administrators were committed to professional development and accepted collective responsibility for the achievement of all learners. The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of teachers and administrators about the practice of distributed leadership and how it contributed to the functionality of a professional learning community (PLC). The conceptual framework was derived from DuFour's work on PLCs, which provided a strategy for the development of collaborative school cultures. The research questions focused on the experiences of administrators and teachers who utilized distributed leadership in the formation and continued operation of a PLC. A case study design was used to capture the insights of 2 administrators and 7 teachers through interviews and observations; a purposeful sampling process was used to select the participants. Emergent themes were identified through open coding, and the findings were developed and checked for trustworthiness through member checking and triangulation. The findings revealed that distributed leadership requires administrator empowerment of teachers to work collaboratively in an environment of mutual trust. Findings were used to create a professional development workshop designed to increase faculty collaboration and enhance teacher efficacy. This study has implications for positive social change by providing administrators with a structure for developing teacher leaders.

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Dedication

The research project is dedicated to my wonderful wife, Sara. Her love, support, and encouragement never wavered throughout the long journey required for the completion of my doctoral degree. She selflessly assumed the varied responsibilities associated with caring for our two young children during the many hours I spent reading and writing. The decision to pursue a doctoral degree was made with the understanding that it would open the doors for future opportunities that would allow me to better support my wife and children. Now that this process has come to an end, I am fully committed to redeeming the time spent away from my family and pursing the career paths that will allow me to provide for them in ways we could previously only imagine.

Acknowledgments

Dr. Jones and Dr. Wattam are to be commended for their unfailing encouragement throughout the long process of research, writing, and rewriting. Their support has made reaching the conclusion of this research study a reality.

I would also like to recognize the continued patience and understanding of my children as they were often told to "leave daddy alone while he works on his paper." Well the paper is done, and I cannot wait to devote my future weekends to spending time with my wife and kids!

My parents always believed in me and encouraged me to do my absolute best. The values they instilled in me as a child have served me well, and I am forever grateful. To the rest of my family, I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation for the kind words and encouragement offered during this long journey. Many of you provided a sounding board for my frustrations during the difficult moments, but none of you ever waivered in your support and belief that I would one day complete the journey.

Finally, I want to recognize the many coworkers, friends, and former students who have encouraged me along the way. I still remember the class that lovingly referred to me as "Dr. Stubblefield" long before I dreamed of pursuing an advanced degree. Perhaps the unique wisdom of youth recognized something in me that I did not yet see in myself.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The problem that confronted the faculty at a state-chartered, independent school in Central Ohio was the lack of a collaborative culture in which teachers and administrators are actively committed to professional development and accept collective responsibility for student learning. The economic recession of 2008-2009 contributed to a significant decline in student enrollment. Although the school operates as a nonprofit, educational institution, most of the school's operating budget is based on tuition and state-funded reimbursement programs that base the amount of allocated state funds on the school's student enrollment. By 2012, the student population had been reduced by over 30%, and the school was facing large budget shortfalls. Funds typically devoted to professional development programs were diverted to other areas to maintain a balanced budget. During the same 5-year period, the school had also experienced significant changes in both teacher and administrative leadership. The cumulative effect of the budget shortfalls combined with staffing transitions led to the abandonment of all professional development programs resulting in the development of a school culture in which faculty members taught in isolated classroom learning environments. These factors contributed to the specific problem that was detected at a state-chartered, independent school in Central Ohio that lacked a collaborative culture in which teachers and administrators are actively committed to professional development and accept collective responsibility for the achievement of all learners.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) enacted in 2002 created a new era of school accountability and gave rise to a generation of students educated in a culture of high-stakes testing. In 2015, the administration of President Barak Obama passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as a replacement for the previous administration's NCLB legislation. In the spring of 2017, the administration of President Donald Trump relaxed some of the requirements of the 2015 Obama-era regulations and provided states with a shorter, less detailed application template (Klein, 2017). While granting a measure of increased local autonomy regarding performance measures, ESSA still required detailed accountability standards and mandated assessments (Ohio Department of Education [ODE], 2017). More importantly, the modifications reflected in the new legislation did not eliminate the culture of high-stakes testing, and the ESSA application completed by the ODE established yearly increases in student metrics in mathematics and English language achievement rates through the 2025-2026 school year (ODE, 2017).

Schools have responded to the requirements for increased accountability, targeted goals for academic achievement, and mandates to close the achievement gap by instituting a variety of professional development programs. Over time, most professional development programs devolve into top-down initiatives in which teachers become passive observers who are disengaged from any semblance of learning or development (Easton, 2015; Wennergren, 2016). The development of professional learning communities (PLCs) is recognized as an effective approach to building collaborative cultures that foster higher teacher efficacy and result in increased academic achievement (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006; DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Hallam, Smith, Hite,

Hite, & Wilcox, 2015; Schneider, Huss-Lederman, & Sherlock, 2012; Sims & Penny, 2015). PLCs are characterized by the active participation of teachers and administrators who are committed to the practice of collective inquiry and shared responsibility for the achievement of all learners (DuFour et al., 2006; DuFour & Mattos, 2013).

The demands created by the NCLB and the ESSA have resulted in secondary schools becoming increasingly complex systems in which administrators are being held responsible for ever-lengthening lists of intricate requirements dictated by state and local districts attempting to adhere to the requisite federal programs. The ability of a single school administrator to manage the myriad tasks required to lead a school has vanished in the complex web of legislative requirements. Devos, Tuytens, and Hulpia (2014) argued that the model of the heroic leader often identified in the embodiment of the school principal must be replaced with a new concept of distributed leadership. According to Harris (2012), the position of the school principal is undergoing a dramatic transformation from the apex of authority in the school hierarchy to a role that actively relinquishes a modicum of authority in a new system in which the leadership potential of others within the school community is identified and accelerated. Bush and Glover (2012) argued that the system of distributed leadership is a recognition of the important influence of many individuals within a school community, and although they may not hold formal administrative positions, their impact on the educational system is significant and undeniable.

Distributed leadership is not a simple rebranding of the overused management practice of dumping unwanted tasks on subordinates under the guise of delegation. Harris

(2012) identified the need for distributed leadership by noting the fact that most school administrators lack the time and diverse range of knowledge required to lead every aspect of their school communities. This realization calls for the flattening of traditional leadership structures and the expansion of collaboration vertically and horizontally through the development of effective leadership teams (Harris, 2013), or more precisely the development of professional learning communities in which teachers are empowered to collaborate and develop practices to improve academic achievement (DuFour & Mattos, 2013).

Rationale

According to the ODE (2015), the absence of a PLC and a collective commitment to professional development creates the potential for less effective classroom teaching, reduced teacher performance, and student achievement. The ODE partnered with Learning Forward, a nonprofit education association, to develop the Ohio Standards of Professional Development. The revised standards, published in 2015, detail the importance of professional development. According to the ODE Professional Development Guide (ODE, 2015), a comprehensive program of professional development serves to improve teacher performance and enhance student achievement. Additionally, Standard 1 in the Professional Development Guide indicates that professional development is most effective in improving classroom teaching and student performance when it is conducted in a PLC in which group members collaboratively engage in an effort of "collective improvement" (ODE, 2015, p. 2).

The current study's purpose was to investigate how the practice of distributed leadership contributes to the formation of a collaborative school culture in which staff members assume collective responsibility for student achievement and are actively committed to a continued system of professional development within the framework of a PLC. A qualitative case study approach was used to gather data from a state-chartered independent school located in Central Ohio in which administrators and teachers are utilizing distributed leadership in an existing PLC. Personal interviews and observations were used to gather data from the administrators and teachers participating in the PLC.

Definition of Terms

Academic achievement: The degree to which a learner has achieved established instructional goals (Steinmayr, Meißner, Weidinger, & Wirthwein, 2014).

Andragogy: The scientific theory of the adult learning process. The theory was introduced and advanced by Malcolm Knowles, and it identifies distinctions in the learning process for children and adults (McGrath, 2009).

Collaboration: In the context of a school setting, collaboration involves educators working cooperatively to achieve established goals. Collaboration is not to be confused with camaraderie (DuFour, 2004) and requires educators to collectively ensure the learning of all students.

Distributed leadership: The distributed model of leadership requires the recognition that many sources of influence exist, both formal and informal, in any organizational environment (Harris, 2013). In an educational setting, distributed leadership is characterized by the intentional sharing and development of influence by the

principal with other members of the faculty who are not in a formal position of leadership (Harris, 2012).

Efficacy: Bandura (1993) argued that individuals with more self-efficacy are more inclined to engage in pursuits that others would regard as difficult challenges. Bandura also argued that educators who possess greater amounts of personal efficacy often promote more positive learning environments and foster higher levels of student achievement.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): Legislation that became law in December of 2015 and represented a major legislative follow-up to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002 (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Instructional leadership: A school leadership model in which the school administrator is committed to enhancing the quality of instruction and the achievement of all learners within the school community. The goal is to achieve higher rates of individual teacher, student, and school performance (Urick & Bowers, 2014).

Professional learning community (PLC): A collaborative group of teachers and administrators who endeavor to establish targets for student learning, share research and best practices, and elevate the academic achievement of the students entrusted to their care (Schneider et al., 2012).

Teacher leadership: The use of influence by teachers within the school to individually or collectively effect the learning environment in accordance with the established goals (Hairon, Goh, & Chua, 2015).

Transformational leadership: A leadership model developed to foster positive change and to promote better individual and group performance. Transformational leadership was originally developed in the corporate world and later adopted by school leaders to achieve school reforms (Urick & Bowers, 2014).

Significance of the Study

The list of disparate responsibilities being placed on school administrators has increased dramatically with the passage of NCLB and the recently passed ESSA. The legislative mandates have created an educational culture marked by high-stakes testing and detailed accountability standards. In response to these demands, the professional development programs in many schools have devolved into passive endeavors for teachers who gather in meeting rooms or assembly halls to hear administrator-driven directives formulated in response to the latest district or state standards (Wennergren, 2016). The top-down approach to meeting accountability standards fails to develop a collaborative faculty culture, improve teaching practice, and increase student learning and achievement (Sims & Penny, 2015).

PLCs have proven to be an effective strategy to allow for the development of collaborative cultures in which teachers are collectively accountable for improving instructional practices and student achievement (Hallam et al., 2015). Administrators who empower teachers to become more engaged in the creation of PLCs benefit from the collective experience and expertise of their faculty (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). School administrators practicing distributed leadership allow teachers to assume an integral role in creating collaborative cultures based on a system of collective inquiry with a continual

commitment to results-oriented improvements (DuFour et al., 2006; DuFour & Mattos, 2013).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate how within the PLC framework the practice of distributed leadership can be utilized to foster a culture of improved faculty collaboration in which teachers and administrators are active participants in professional development and assume collective responsibility for academic achievement. The study was designed to address the problem of an absence of professional development in a state-chartered, independent school in Central Ohio that lacked a collaborative culture and a functioning PLC. The research questions provided the framework of inquiry for the study as I sought to develop a more complete interpretation of the experiences of administrators and teachers working in a state-chartered, independent school that utilized the principles of distributed leadership within the framework of an existing PLC. This case study included the following research questions:

1. How does the practice of distributed leadership contribute to the development and continued functionality of a PLC?

2. What are the responsibilities and experiences of administrators utilizing distributed leadership in the formation and continued operation of a PLC?

3. What are the roles and experiences of teachers who have been empowered to be teacher leaders in the school?

Review of the Literature

Several sources were used to collect information to support this qualitative case study. Peer-reviewed research was identified using academic databases such as Education Resources Information Center, ProQuest Central, and the Thoreau Multi-Database Search available through the Walden University library. Federal and state education guidelines and requirements were found through an examination of the Department of Education website and the Ohio Department of Education website.

Conceptual Framework

The research identifying the structure, benefits, and best practices associated with PLCs by DuFour et al. (2006) formed the conceptual framework for this study. PLCs are a proven strategy for fostering teacher collaboration, developing teacher efficacy, and increasing student achievement (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Hallam et al., 2015; Mintzes, Marcum, Messerschmidt-Yates, & Mark, 2013; Schneider et al., 2012; Sims & Penny, 2015). DuFour et al. (2006) discovered six central characteristics of an effective PLC:

1. a collaboratively developed and collectively ensured vision and commitment to ensure the learning of each student within the school or district;

2. a faculty culture marked by collaborative efforts that focus on refining classroom practices to increase the learning of all students;

3. collective inquiry to develop a shared understanding of the current school reality and discover best practices to improve classroom instruction and student learning;

4. an action-oriented framework in which team members value learning by doing
    and seek to effect change through the implementation of discoveries made
    through collective inquiries and collaboratively developed learning objectives;

5. a commitment from all faculty members, not just those in positions of formal
    authority, to revoke complacency with the status quo and continually seek
    new methods that allow for continuous improvements in the learning
    community; and

6. a results-oriented approach in which established learning goals are
    consistently evaluated to identify areas for improvement in student learning
    and determine the strengths and weaknesses in teaching practices.

The core characteristics of PLCs formed the framework for the current case study. In the review of the relevant literature, I explain the findings of current academic research regarding effective PLCs and their effect on faculty collaboration, teacher efficacy, and student achievement. I also examine the effect of distributed leadership in fostering the development of a vibrant PLC. Although the principal performs an indispensable role in the establishment and functionality of an effective PLC (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Sims & Penny, 2015), the leadership of the principal is not sufficient to ensure the long-term effectiveness of any PLC (DeMatthews, 2014; Hairon et al., 2015).

Review of the Broader Problem

Peer-reviewed studies were identified using a wide range of academic databases and search terms such as *professional learning communities*, *distributed leadership*, *educational leadership*, *collaborative leadership*, *department chairs*, *vertical teams*,

professional development, and *academic achievement*. Additional peer-reviewed research was found by examining the reference sections of key studies to identify similar studies. Priority was given to research conducted within the past 5 years, but seminal works were also included to provide the necessary background to frame the topic.

Origins of Professional Learning Communities

The original theories of professional learning communities emerged from the school restructuring movement of the 1980s and early 1990s. The restructuring movement began with the publication of a report published by President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education entitled *A Nation at Risk* (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). According to the report, U.S. national security was being jeopardized by a trend of low academic achievement, and the movement to restructure U.S. schools began. The restructuring movement was broad and lacked clear definition (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Often the focus of school improvement was placed on the structure of the schools and broad curriculum changes rather than on developing teachers and creating a school culture of professional collaboration and collective responsibility (Louis, Kruse, & Raywid, 1996). In 1994, Kruse, Louis, and Bryk (1994) called for a movement to develop the professionalization of teaching and the building of communities of professionals within U.S. schools. At the time, the call for professional communities of educators remained under the umbrella of the restructuring movement (Kruse et al., 1994).

The mid 1990s marked a period of changes as the restructuring movement gradually lost momentum and educational reformers began to push for reforms to

transition away from the structures of the schools to an emphasis on increasing the

capacity of the teachers working within the schools. Newmann and Wehlage (1995)

supported the claims of Kruse et al. (1994) when they argued that schools that functioned

with stronger professional communities more effectively adopted the reforms necessary

to improve academic achievement. According to Newmann and Wehlage, professional

communities had the ability to improve the organizational capacity of schools, and these

communities were characterized by teachers who embraced a common purpose for

student learning, became involved in collaborative activities to achieve their shared

purpose, and assumed collective responsibility for the educational achievement of all

learners entrusted to their care.

Louis et al. (1996) identified additional characteristics of what were still being

called professional communities. In schools, these professional communities

demonstrated the following characteristics: shared values for student learning, reflective

dialogue among the teaching faculty, and deprivatization of practice marked by the

development of a more collaborative culture (Louis et al., 1996). In these communities,

the principal assumed the role of the intellectual leader within the school, but often the

principal led from a position in the center of the professional community in which the

leadership hierarchy was more flattened that the traditional top-down leadership models

(Louis et al., 1996). The extent of the flattened organizational hierarchy did not mean that

tasks once reserved for school administrators were now delegated to teachers; instead,

professional communities were characterized by collaborative environments in which

problems were addressed as collective opportunities for change and improvement (Louis et al., 1996).

Kruse et al. (1994) issued a challenge for professional communities within schools to be transformed from a whisper to a major rallying cry. The transformation they envisioned became a reality when DuFour and Eaker (1998) published *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*. Over the next several years, the idea of what were now being called professional learning communities became a more mainstream focus of educational reformers. The characteristics of professional learning communities first identified by Newmann and Wehlage (1995) and Louis et al. (1996) were expanded and developed by DuFour et al. (2006) as discussed in the previous section on the conceptual framework for this study.

Distributed Leadership

School administrators are often overwhelmed by the volume of work required by their position (Spillane, Harris, Jones, & Mertz, 2015). As school systems become increasingly complex, the actions of formal leaders (school administrators) are being dominated by noninstructional tasks like budget, staffing, discipline, and scheduling (Halverson & Clifford, 2013; Halverson, Kelley, & Shaw, 2014). The result is that school administrators spend significant amounts of time engaged in tasks that do not directly connect to student learning or improving the quality of classroom teaching (Halverson et al., 2014; Yager & Yager, 2012). As a result of school administrators being pulled away from leading the instructional environment, a culture of isolationism develops among classroom teachers, and isolated teachers are often not receptive to attempts by

administrators to become more involved in instructional leadership activities (Yager &

Yager, 2012). Halverson and Clifford (2013) also noted that teachers were initially

resistant to the efforts of school administrators to provide greater levels of instructional

leadership for fear administrative involvement in instructional activities would

significantly limit their instructional freedom in their classrooms.

When school administrators endeavor to foster collaborative environments based

on open communication and mutual trust, positive outcomes can be achieved. Leithwood

and Mascall (2008) found a positive correlation between student achievement and

collective or distributed leadership. The act of distributing leadership among the faculty

served to increase teacher motivation, which had a corresponding effect on student

performance (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). The increase in teacher certification

requirements in many states has resulted in a more self-motivated generation of teachers

that often want to be involved in leadership decisions (McCauley-Smith, Williams,

Gillon, & Braganza, 2015). The move to distributed leadership satisfies the desire for

collaborative decision-making, and the result is often a greater level of buy-in and

commitment for initiatives developed collaboratively (Supovitz & Tognatta, 2013).

Although the concept of shared, collective, or distributed leadership is not new or

revolutionary, the concept is still not well defined (Baloglu, 2012; Bolden, 2011; Tian,

Risku, & Collin, 2016). Many educators interchangeably use the terms collective,

collaborative, democratic, and shared when discussing distributed leadership (Baloglu,

2012; Bolden, 2011; Tian et al., 2016). Although the practice of distributed leadership

may have similarities with shared or collaborative leadership, there are key distinctions

that must be clearly identified and further explored. Distributed leadership, according to Bolden (2011), is not universally inclusive, and not every faculty member who is working in a distributed leadership school is going to be labeled as an instructional leader. Instead, Baloglu (2012) identified distributed leadership as a collaborative effort in which individuals within a school community pool resources, talents, and expertise to create a cooperative entity that is more effective than the total of its disparate components. In a similar manner, Bush and Glover (2012) argued that distribution implies a shared responsibility for decision-making and often involves a combination of empowerment and reduced monitoring as the head administrator grants other school leaders a greater measure of autonomy. Although the head administrator relinquishes a measure of control, the distributed leadership environment is also characterized by the collective efforts of administrators and teachers working to the attainment of shared goals or results (Baloglu, 2012). Distributed leadership functions best in environments characterized by shared values and mutual trust (Bush & Glover, 2012).

The model of distributed leadership does not function without the support of a formal leader often found in the form of a head administrator or principal (Harris, 2013). Harris (2012) contended that school administrators retain significant influence and responsibilities while practicing distributed leadership, but the individual school leader no longer has the diverse expertise necessary to manage every program in increasingly complex school systems. Instead of establishing an environment in which all control is relinquished, the leader furnishes a framework for educational administrators to identify, foster, and cultivate the leadership potential of faculty members demonstrating advanced

expertise and allows for the expansion of their influence throughout the school (Tian et al., 2016). Under distributed leadership, school administrators are responsible for establishing the goals and vision for school improvement while fostering a collaborative culture characterized by mutual trust and respect that allows the system to flourish (Louis, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Smylie, 2013). The system does not allow the school leader to simply dump tasks on others without providing clarity; clarity of mission, values, goals, and direction must be developed by the school administrator in conjunction with other faculty members (Delp, 2014).

Woods and Roberts (2016) described schools that had adopted the distributed leadership framework as a *holarchic* network compared to the more traditional top-down hierarchy. However, in the more circular, holarchic system, the principal still retains significant leadership influence, and distributed leadership does not ensure an equal dispersion of leadership empowerment across all faculty members (Woods & Roberts, 2016). As schools respond to the changing educational landscape and endeavor to provide for the needs of 21st century students, the model of distributed leadership becomes an essential practice (Harris, 2012) in which the goal is to increase the quality rather than the quantity of school leaders (Harris, 2013).

Distributed leadership and the sharing of authority among other faculty members in the school community does not happen by chance. In much the same manner as with the development of PLCs, the implementation of a distributed model of leadership requires intentional efforts and the continued support of school administrators (Gedik & Bellibas, 2015; Klar, 2012; Klar, Huggins, Hammonds, & Buskey, 2016; McKenzie &

Locke, 2014). Once a school administrator has identified faculty members with leadership potential, the administrator must create leadership opportunities and work to facilitate the transition from traditional faculty member to faculty leader through the development of a system of consistent support (Klar et al., 2016). Time is often the biggest factor in the development of future instructional leaders in a school community, and school administrators can adjust class schedules and reduce teaching loads to ensure the teacher has enough time to assume additional leadership roles (Klar et al., 2016; McKenzie & Locke, 2014). School administrators must also acknowledge the reluctance or possibly even the resistance of some faculty members to assume an expanded leadership role (Klar et al., 2016; Torrance, 2013), and in these situations, the school administrator must never force a faculty member to assume instructional leadership roles.

In addition to providing time within the school schedule, school administrators need to provide potential faculty leaders with specific instruction to develop as school leaders. Providing training in andragogy, the teaching of adult learners, is a worthwhile endeavor for school administrators seeking to develop additional instructional leaders within a school community (McKenzie & Locke, 2014). In a distributed leadership model, teacher leaders are often tasked with working with other faculty members to improve classroom instruction to increase student learning. Teacher leaders seeking to influence other teachers within the school community must understand that the learning needs of adults are different from the learning needs of children (McGrath, 2009). When following the principles of andragogy, the teacher working with adult learners assumes the role of a facilitator, asks questions, and encourages the adult learners to make

connections between personal experiences and the new material being presented (McGrath, 2009).

Another important way for school administrators to encourage the growth and future success of other school leaders within the distributed framework is through the public acknowledgment of the teacher's expanded leadership role within the school community. The school administrator should communicate to other faculty members the duties of the teacher leader tasked with enhancing the educational practice within the school, and if needed, the school administrator should help resolve conflicts with teachers who demonstrate an unwillingness to improve or participate in professional development (McKenzie & Locke, 2014). However, it is important to note that although helpful, the endorsement of administration does not by itself make someone an effective teacher leader, and to be successful, teachers need first to come to view themselves as instructional leaders within the school community (Torrance, 2013).

A key point to remember is that not all scholars view distributed leadership as a panacea for school reform. In contrast to the work of many other educational leadership researchers, Lumby (2013) adopted a more critical view of distributed leadership. A common view holds that distributed leaders seek to identify leadership abilities, develop leadership skills, and then empower teachers and other faculty members to lead within the school community. However, Lumby (2013) contended that rather than empowering teachers, school administrators in a distributed leadership model are tricking teachers into assuming increasing workloads under the guise of empowerment and leadership. Torrance (2013) also adopted a more skeptical view of distributed leadership and

identified several misconceptions about the ability of distributed leadership to automatically achieve desired school reforms. According to Torrance (2013), some teachers do not want the extra responsibility that accompanies even informal leadership roles and believe that the added responsibility represents an additional duty or burden rather than a means of recognizing a teacher's exceptional ability or leadership potential. Furthermore, Torrance (2013) argues that tensions and conflict will naturally occur as faculty members assume new responsibilities under the distributed leadership model. Tensions may exist between teachers who were not granted expanded leadership roles and school administrators or the newly appointed teacher leaders on faculty (Torrance, 2013).

Even supporters of the distributed leadership model realize that without careful planning, distributed leadership can become another way to impose top-down policies from the school board or the administration (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). Within the school campus, the barriers of trust and control must be overcome for distributed leadership to be effective (Spillane, Harris, Jones, & Mertz, 2015). Spillane et al., (2015), found that some school administrators were unwilling to relinquish a measure of leadership authority necessary to empower other teacher leaders within their school communities. According to Harris and DeFlaminis (2016), distributed leadership fails to provide an effective leadership model in every school, and even when utilized, the practice requires careful planning by school administrators and a willingness to provide the necessary training to develop teacher as instructional leaders.

Professional Learning Community and Distributed Leadership

Although distributed leadership within a school community may take many forms, it is important to realize the complementary nature of PLCs and the distributed leadership model. Urick and Bowers (2014), in their research and analysis of principal leadership styles, discovered that one of the main criticisms of instructional leadership was the top-down approach that is often adopted. While striving to improve student instruction, school administrators failed to devote sufficient attention to building the school culture or community. Principals who adopted a distributed perspective of instructional leadership were rewarded with a more stable staff of teacher leaders who functioned in a collaborative, goal-oriented community that willingly shared the responsibility for the instructional climate, school mission, and continued professional development (Urick & Bowers, 2014). The school culture resulting from distributed forms of instructional leadership identified by Urick and Bowers (2014) shared the central traits of a successful PLC identified by DuFour et al. (2006).

The research of Jacobson (2011) found that distributed leadership allowed the teachers to feel empowered and schools developed cultures of professional development and embraced collective goals for improving classroom instruction and increasing academic achievement. Fink (2011) found that distributed leadership must represent a culture change away from leadership by delegation to the development of a school culture where leadership is stretched throughout the school community as in a properly functioning PLC where the faculty engages in continued professional development to achieve the shared vision of improving student performance through quality classroom

instruction. According to Wells and Klocko (2015), schools that are structured as learning communities or PLCs have an increased capacity for leadership development, and when teacher leaders work in partnership with school administrators in a distributed model, the ensuing flattened hierarchy builds a culture where the central PLC characteristics previously identified by DuFour et al. (2006) can flourish.

Teacher leaders identified by school administrators are often asked to assume the role of vertical team leaders, department chairs, or instructional leaders within a PLC (Klar, 2012; Klar, 2012). PLCs are characterized by the active participation of administrators and teachers who are committed to the practice of collective inquiry and shared responsibility for student learning (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). Administrators who empower teachers to have a greater voice and increased influence the creation and continued functionality of PLCs benefit from the collective experiences and expertise of their faculty, and this type shared empowerment can best be accomplished through the practice of distributed leadership (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Harris, 2014;). Under this model, the traditional leadership structures are flattened to ensure the expansion of leadership and collective responsibility both horizontally and vertically through the school community (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Larsen & Rieckhoff, 2014). Empowered teacher leaders must not only be provided with opportunities to lead, but school administrators are responsible for the development of a safe support system in which new teacher leaders are allowed to fail (DeMatthews, 2014).

In many school systems, department chairs can serve as the empowered teacher leaders in PLCs organized around the principle of distributed leadership. DeAngelis

(2013) referred to department chairs as the largest group of formal leaders in American high schools and found that almost 80% of schools have department chairs or another similar system already established. However, many of these department chair systems exist in name only, and department chairs are often found to be a significantly underutilized resource (Bredeson, 2013; Klar, 2013). Klar (2013) found that department chairs served effectively as instructional leaders and helped foster the collaborative culture needed for successful PLCs. When PLCs are organized by subject areas, teachers often view department chairs as the faculty members most responsible for providing instructional leadership (Bredeson, 2013). Additionally, department chairs often possess greater expertise in a specific subject matter that lends to leadership credibility (Klar, 2013), and can serve as a bridge between the principal and other teachers (Delp, 2014).

As in distributed leadership, principals played an integral role in the development and continued functionality of an effective PLC (DeMatthews, 2014; Sims & Penny, 2015). A system of shared leadership between the administrators and the teachers participating in the PLC is essential, and school administrators bear the responsibility for developing the collaborative vision for the school and, more importantly, student success (Wennergren, 2016). Even with the support of department chairs, school administrators ultimately serve as the head instructional leader within the school community (Gedik & Bellibas, 2015), and the school administrator bears the responsibility of fostering increased instructional leadership capacity in department chairs or PLC team leaders (Klar, 2013).

In addition to building a shared vision, the flattening of leadership structures in a distributed leadership framework provides for the development of increased levels of trust and cooperation between administrators and teachers (Hallam et al., 2015). Expanded levels of trust are evident in schools where the teachers involved in PLCs are empowered to develop their own goals and solutions to improve student achievement instead of being forced to implement mandated "solutions" imposed by state or district leaders (Easton, 2015; Hallam et al., 2015). PLCs formed with authoritarian mandates or top-down approaches to improving student achievement are rarely successful as they fail to foster a collaborative culture that promotes teacher engagement necessary to effect improvements in the instructional practices used in the classroom and the resulting student achievement (Sims & Penny, 2015).

The benefits of establishing an effective PLCs through the implementation of distributed leadership can be found in the improved relationships forged between teachers and administrators who engage in a collaborative culture, the promotion of high levels of teacher learning, and the ultimate improvements in classroom instructional practices (Hairon et al., 2015). More importantly, the implementation of distributed leadership practices in a PLC framework serves to improve teacher efficacy that results in improved levels of student achievement (Chang, 2011; Hallam et al., 2015; Larsen & Rieckhoff, 2014; Mascall, Leithwood, Straus, & Sacks, 2008; Mintzes et al., 2013; Sims & Penny, 2015; Tian et al., 2016). Bandura (1993) found that a faculty's level of collective efficacy was significantly correlated with the level of academic achievement within the school. According to the research completed by Angelle and Teague (2014), a significant

correlation exists concerning the extent of teacher leadership allowed within a school community and the faculty's level of collective efficacy. School administrators who fostered a culture where the contributions and suggestions of teacher leaders were incorporated into a system of collective decision making were rewarded with increased levels of faculty efficacy (Angelle & Teague, 2014).

Similar findings by Mintzes et al. (2013) confirmed that teachers who participated in a collaborative PLC environment for three or more years demonstrated substantially high levels of efficacy that resulted in improved teaching practices. Additionally, research shows that as teacher efficacy improves, teachers are more likely to view the feedback received from school administrators or other teacher leaders as an opportunity for potential improvement rather than a means for criticizing their instructional performance (Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2015). Over time, teachers participating in a PLC are more willing to implement changes to their teaching practices as their self-efficacy improves. The combined results of implementing the practice of distributed leadership within the PLC framework results in the formation of collaboratively based cultures that foster higher teacher efficacy and result in improved teaching practices and increased levels of academic achievement (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Mintzes et al., 2013; Schneider et al., 2012).

Implications

The purpose of my research was to investigate how the practice of distributed leadership, within the framework of a PLC, contributes to the formation of a school culture that is collaborative and fosters and acceptance of collective responsibility for the

achievement of all learners among the administrators and teachers. Data were collected, analyzed, and used in the development of a project (see Appendix A) or a deliverable that can be used to assist other schools in the formation of collaborative school culture within the framework of a functioning PLC.

The design and content of the project were determined by the research findings, and it is framed as a professional development program that can be utilized for the benefit of school administrators and teachers. The project includes materials and instructions to assist school leaders and their faculty with the adoption and development of distributed leadership practices within the framework of a PLC. Sections of the project focus on improving collaboration between teachers and the identification and development of teacher leaders within a PLC.

<p style="text-align:center;">**Summary**</p>

Section 1 described the problem situated in a local setting with implications for a larger audience of education practitioners. The specific local problem was identified in a state-chartered, independent school located in Central Ohio where the school environment has been adversely impacted by a lack of organized professional development, and new school administrators are endeavoring to establish a PLC utilizing the practices of distributed leadership. Section 1 also provided an examination of the PLC framework and reviewed relevant literature related to PLCs and the practice of distributed leadership in an educational environment. The section also identified research questions and examined the significance and potential implications of the study.

Section 2 described the research methodology of a qualitative case study and justified the alignment with the previously described problem. The research participants were identified, and a description of the selection methods was provided. Measures utilized for the protection of the research participants were also detailed in accordance with the established norms of ethical research. Section 2 also provided a complete explanation of the methods used to gather and subsequently analyze the research data.

An explanation of the project or a deliverable that was developed from the findings of the research and analysis is provided in Section 3. In addition to the project description, a rationale and literature review was also included to lend scholarly support for the development of the project. A system of project evaluation and a discussion of the implications is also discussed in Section 3.

Section 4 provides the opportunity for reflection and a discussion of the conclusions drawn from the research and the development of the project. Strengths, limitations, and an examination of alternative approaches to address the problem are discussed. Final reflections focused on the significance of the findings and possible implications for studies that have yet to be conducted. Section 4 concludes with a final summary and key takeaways from the research analysis and project development.

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The researcher is the primary mechanism of collecting and analyzing data in the inductive process of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative methodologies are focused on developing a sense of meaning drawn from the experiences of the research participants, and the studies are often characterized by rich, thick descriptions of these experiences (Merriam, 2009). In the current study, a qualitative case study design was used to obtain a more profound understanding of the practice of distributed leadership within the framework of a PLC. Although some researchers find similarities between ethnographic and case study research, the case study design for this project had several important distinctions from ethnographic methodologies (see Creswell, 2012).

Ethnographic studies are focused on the culture or shared "values, beliefs, and attitudes" (Merriam, 2009, p. 27) of a defined group of people. However, the distinguishing factor in the design of the current study was the recognition of a bounded system in which the extent of the study was limited to a "program, a group, an institution, a community, or a specific policy" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). Creswell (2012) identified qualitative case studies as a type of ethnographic research in which the research is more focused on the exploration and understanding of the actual case or object of study rather than on making connections to an identified anthropological, cultural theme. The case study methodology was best suited for this research because the scope was limited to the administrators and faculty members of an independent, state-chartered secondary school in Central Ohio who had implemented a distributed leadership program.

Participants

The process of selecting study participants is a crucial component of any qualitative study. The research participants must be selected according to clearly established guidelines to ensure the study's validity (Creswell, 2012). The research must also be conducted in a manner that is ethical and ensures the safety and protection of the individuals who participate in the study (Merriam, 2009). In the sections that follow, I outline the procedures for identifying, selecting, and safeguarding the participants in this study.

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research often includes the technique of purposeful sampling. The sampling method involves selecting research participants from a specific group or site to understand a predetermined phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). I identified the participants for this study by using homogenous sampling, which is a type of purposeful sampling in which participants are selected as a result of membership in a specific site with defined characteristics (Creswell, 2012).

The goal of this study was to investigate how the practice of distributed leadership, within the framework of a PLC, contributes to the formation of a culture of improved faculty collaboration in which teachers and administrators are active participants in professional development and assume collective responsibility for academic achievement. I used purposeful sampling techniques to identify participants from a state-chartered, independent school located in Central Ohio that had an active PLC following the principles of distributed leadership. The teachers identified for possible participation were required to be active members in the PLC. Although there is no

established minimum participant number for qualitative research, two administrators and seven teachers participated in the study to reach saturation or the point at which interviewing other participants would not provide substantially new insights or information regarding their experiences (see Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Creswell (2009) noted that in qualitative research the sample size is determined not by statistical needs but by the desire to reach data saturation. In some studies, saturation may require only a small number of subjects, but Creswell noted that the average qualitative study could reach saturation with 10-12 participants.

I identified a state-chartered, independent school in the Central Ohio area that had a functioning PLC and followed the principles of distributed leadership. After identifying the school, I contacted the superintendent to review the scope of my study and the feasibility of conducting the research on the campus. The school was divided into three campus locations: two for elementary students and one for middle and high school students. My research was limited to the campus for Grades 6–12 in which two administrators (a middle school and a high school principal) and 33 staff members were responsible for approximately 300–350 students. Given the size of the school, having two administrators and seven teachers participate in the study allowed me to reach the point of saturation.

After I received approval from Walden University (IRB 09-18-18-0527093) to conduct the study, I made a personal phone call to the superintendent to obtain initial contact information in the form of email addresses for the administrative team members and potential faculty participants. I emailed these individuals an invitation to participate

in the study and the informed consent forms. Individuals who chose to participate in the study responded to me via email, and I coordinated all visits to campus for interviews and observations with the school superintendent.

It was crucial for me to establish a positive relationship with each of the individuals participating in the research. Qualitative studies require the researcher to spend significant amounts of time with the individuals participating in the study (Creswell, 2012). It was vital that I presented myself in a manner that engendered trust and was free of judgment or condemnation. If the faculty members believed that I was coming to their school to judge their performance, their enthusiasm and willingness to participate in the study would have diminished. I developed working relationships with the participants to learn about their individual experiences and gather their stories. A crucial first step was to establish a strong relationship with the school superintendent who introduced me to the members of the school faculty.

Qualitative researchers bear significant responsibility for conducting their research in an ethical manner that protects the research participants. Lodico et al. (2010) identified the importance of informed consent and confidentiality when conducting qualitative research in an ethical manner. Informed consent involves informing research participants of the purpose, potential risks, and voluntary nature of the study. Consent forms for both school administrators and teachers were developed and presented to participants for their signature to ensure that they entered the study willingly and with full knowledge of the research goals and possible risks. It was important that the research participants knew that the information they shared during the study would remain

confidential and that I would make every effort to protect them from potential harm that could result from their participation. To safeguard the identity of participants, I used a numeric coding system to ensure their confidentiality. I also assigned pseudonyms to participants that were used when reporting the research results and data analysis.

Data Collection

Personal interviews and observations were used to gather data from administrators and teachers working in a school that actively practiced the principles of distributed leadership. I analyzed the data from interviews and observations to determine how the practice of distributed leadership contributed to the development and continued functionality of a PLC.

Data Collection Methods

The interviews followed a structured format in which a predetermined list of questions was used with each participant (see Appendix C). I developed the interview questions that were reviewed and revised as my work was evaluated by my doctoral committee members and the assigned university research reviewer. The questions were designed in an open-ended manner to elicit unvarnished responses from all participants. Creswell (2012) noted that the interviews in qualitative studies should allow the study members the opportunity to form their independent responses to all researcher-formulated questions. Following the recommendations of Creswell, I used an audio recording device to capture all interview details. The recordings were transcribed for my use in the process of data analysis. In addition to audio recordings, I took field notes to provide additional data for the case study.

Attending the PLC meeting allowed me to observe the interactions of the research participants within the PLC framework. The observation focused on the leadership dynamics and collaborative nature of the participants. Creswell (2012) recommended the formation and use of observation protocols with adequate spacing for two distinct types of data collection: one column for descriptions of the physical activities and one column for recording the researcher's insights and reflections regarding the observed actions. Audio recordings were also created to provide further documentation of the PLC meetings and to confirm the accuracy of field notes.

The research questions, interview protocols, and observation protocols had not been previously published. I drafted each of these documents for the purpose of achieving the goals outlined for this study. Following each interview, I developed transcripts from the audio recordings and combined them with field notes taken during the interview. A similar process was used to create transcripts from the audio recordings of all observed PLC meetings and integrate the data in the form of field notes through the observation protocol. A research journal was used to maintain a summary of all interviews, observations, and reflections that occurred during the data collection process.

Role of the Researcher

For this qualitative case study, I undertook the task of collecting and analyzing the data to investigate the experiences of the participants. I was a classroom teacher for 16 years and a head administrator at a state-chartered, independent school in Central Ohio for 3 years. I had never been employed at the site of the case study and only knew the head administrator through passing interactions at regional school administrator

conferences. I did not know and did not have any prior interaction with any of the other research participants.

Data Analysis

Once the data were collected, I organized them in a meaningful way to provide for complete and accurate analysis. The audio recordings of each interview were transcribed by listening to the audio and typing the information into a Word document. The process of data transcription was time consuming, but it provided a deep familiarity with the information. The transcriptions from the personal interviews were analyzed to identify common themes through a process of coding. Creswell (2012) identified the coding process as a system of assigning labels or codes to segments of data that are related or contain similarities. Because the interview transcripts were contained in a Word document, I was able to search the document for keywords that assisted in the identification of codes. The initial word searches included the following terms that were identified from a review of the literature on PLCs and distributed leadership: *trust*, *student learning*, *achievement*, *leadership*, *freedom*, *collaboration*, *culture*, and *empowerment*. Further analysis of the data resulted in the identification of three core themes as the codes were condensed and organized around a central concept emerging from the data. The identified themes included a collaborative culture, trust between administrators and teachers, and administrator empowerment of teachers.

Creswell (2012) stressed the importance of qualitative researchers using triangulation to validate the data collection and analysis methods. Triangulation is the comparison of data gathered from different sources through different methodologies. I

used the practice of triangulation by conducting interviews with multiple research

participants and collecting additional data through observation. Multiple sources of data

gathered through several different methods improve data accuracy and study credibility

(Merriam, 2009).

Although audio transcripts and field notes were used to ensure accuracy and

minimize researcher bias, I also verified the accuracy of data collection and analysis by

conducting a transcript review. According to Merriam (2009), respondent validation is

one of the most important methods for ensuring accuracy and validating findings.

Creswell (2012) noted that qualitative research designs are often a collaborative process

connecting the research participants with the researcher. The transcript review process

included follow-up communication with the research participants in which I sought their

feedback to ensure clarity and enhance the understanding of the data analysis. Each

research participant was emailed a copy of the transcription of the audio recording

created during their interview and/or the observed teacher meeting. The transcripts also

included copies of the interview questions, and the participants were encouraged to

provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the transcriptions. The participants also had

the opportunity to provide additional information that would increase the clarity of their

answers. I received communication from every participant, and each confirmed the

accuracy of the transcription. Furthermore, none of the participants provided any

additional information.

While engaging in the process of data analysis, I was alert for the appearance of a

discrepant or negative case. Lodico et al. (2010) noted that a negative case is one that

does not fit or that contradicts the researcher's interpretation and explanation of the common experiences of the participants. I did not encounter a discrepant case when analyzing the data collected during my research. The discovery of a discrepant case would have required a reexamination of my analysis and a possible reformulation of my explanations.

Data Analysis Results

Three research questions were formulated to investigate how the practice of distributed leadership can be used within the framework of a PLC to foster a culture of improved faculty collaboration in which teachers and administrators are active participants in professional development and assume collective responsibility for academic achievement. The questions that formed the basis for this qualitative case study included the following:

1. How does the practice of distributed leadership contribute to the development and continued functionality of a PLC?

2. What are the responsibilities and experiences of administrators utilizing distributed leadership in the formation and continued operation of a PLC?

3. What are the roles and experiences of teachers who have been empowered to be teacher leaders in the school?

To answer these questions, I recruited nine research participants. Two school administrators and five teachers participated in personal interviews, and two additional teachers were included in an observed grade-level collaborative meeting. All faculty members worked in a state-chartered, independent school in the Central Ohio area that

has a functioning PLC that follows the principles of distributed leadership. The research

participants were identified with the assistance of the school superintendent, who also

provided permission to conduct the research on the school's campus. All participants

received and signed a consent form and were assigned a numeric code and pseudonym to

protect their identity.

The process of triangulation was used to ensure validity by gathering data from

different sources and through the different methodologies of personal interviews and

observation. In conjunction with personal interviews of the participants, audio recordings

and transcript reviews were also used to verify the accuracy of the collected data and

minimize any researcher bias. Follow-up communication with the research participants

provided them the opportunity to review the audio transcripts and provide any feedback

needed to enhance clarity. The research data, including consent forms, audio recordings,

transcripts, field notes, and other materials are stored in a locked file cabinet in my home

office.

Administrator Interviews

The initial question posed to the school administrators asked for them to share

their insights and experiences working in a PLC. Both administrators indicated that their

school did not actively use the term PLC, but they did actively practice the six central

components of a PLC as identified by DuFour et al. (2006). A common theme for both

administrators was the practice of using the PLC as a framework to provide the teachers

with the opportunity to share their insights and opinions. One administrator shared that

early in his teaching career, he had worked under a school leader who functioned in a

strict top-down leadership format. As a teacher in this environment, Jim recalled the feeling of PLC meetings as another opportunity for the administrator to delegate mandated lists of tasks to the teaching faculty. In his current role, Jim strives to create a collaborative PLC culture that will allow, "a group of people to move collectively or as a group from A to B." Becky echoed similar views when describing the Pulse meetings in her division. As previously stated, the term PLC was not used in the day to day operation of the school, and the Pulse meetings provided an environment where the teachers and administrators could gather to freely exchange information, set student achievement goals, and develop strategies to improve classroom instruction and student learning. Becky stated that the meetings provided her an opportunity to get the "pulse" of her staff, but at the same time, the meetings provided the teachers with the chance to share their voice. In her interview, Becky often used collective terms like setting our goals, working with our students, and serving in our school. It was evident by their responses that both school administrators believed that working in a PLC should be a collaborative effort.

With the second interview question, the administrators had the opportunity to explain the model or system their school used for their PLC. Both administrators discussed the use of more traditionally structured professional development days where faculty members would gather in the division, grade level, or small group meetings. The administrators also referred to formal faculty meetings that were held on Friday mornings before class begins. However, Jim also discussed the desire to continue to build a school culture or community where the teachers are always seeking opportunities to improve teaching practices both formally but also in more informal small group settings that are

restricted by administrator driven directives. The department chairs often led the work done by the small groups. According to Jim, these teacher leaders have both formal and informal conversations throughout the week related to best practices and ideas to improve classroom instruction. In these scenarios, Jim says, "everybody has a voice . . . rather than a delegated memo." Jim believes that his role is to help ensure the framework and foster a culture where every voice can be heard, and strong personalities do not become too dominant.

The goals and purpose of the school's PLC were explored in the third interview question. Once again, the theme of creating a collaborative culture where teachers have a voice and influence was very evident. Both administrators referenced their role is setting the agenda for certain PLC meetings and often providing the overarching structure for yearly goals. However, it was also very evident that the teachers heavily influence even the administrator established goals. Becky highlighted goals from the previous two years of working across the curriculum to improve the student's reading comprehension or their ability to analyze graphs and other visual representations of data on standardized tests. While discussing the process, it became obvious that the specific student learning goal was established through the collaborative effort of reviewing standardized test scores and tracking student achievement levels. Ultimately, Jim and Becky, as administrators, provided the vision and overarching goals associated with increasing student achievement by improving the instructional methods, but the teachers, especially the department chairs, played an integral role in defining the specific focus that was adopted as a yearly goal within the PLC framework.

In the fourth question, the administrators were asked to describe any training or professional development they received regarding their role within the PLC. Both administrators were unable to reference any specific training they had received related to their position as an administrator within the school's PLC. In his answer, Jim mentioned attending a few conferences over the past 25 years that may have provided some training related to administrative leadership within a school. He also referenced some of the instructional development he received as part of the course work required to complete his master's degree in educational leadership. Becky also referenced her master's degree in leadership and curriculum development as providing most of the training she has used in her administrative role within the school's PLC. She also mentioned attending professional development workshops or conferences on a rotating basis. Both administrators were unable to provide specific details regarding any training they may have received regarding their role as an administrator within the PLC. The administrators both referenced the completion of master's degree programs many years earlier as the primary source of their preparation for the role they currently fulfill.

The fifth question focused on the role of the school administrators in the PLC. Jim described his role as being more of a facilitator instead of an authoritative leader. He believed that best work was often done when he cleared "space for people smarter than me or more insightful than me in certain areas . . . to allow their abilities, understandings, and knowledge to rise to the top so that the organization can move forward without being hindered by my limitations." As an example, Jim discussed the formation of a January term program. He was the originator of the idea and cast the initial vision for having a

January term, but the fulfillment of that vision was realized through a series of both formal and informal discussions he facilitated with members of the faculty. According to Jim, "I had a strategy of allowing those discussions and the formation of a January term . . . to mold itself in a manner that fit the faculty, the environment, the culture of this institution." In this environment, the faculty were provided with the freedom and flexibility to develop ideas that would "expand the opportunities for students in a way that would match the skills sets and strengths of this community." Jim reported that by the time the faculty was ready to begin the detailed work of formulating a January term, everybody had already jumped on board, and he had not mandated the implementation of an idea. Becky likewise reported that she allowed members of the faculty to play an active role in the planning of the Pulse meetings. Much like Jim, she provided the framework but allowed faculty members to have significant input on the specific details. Becky commented that she often emailed Pulse meeting agendas to the faculty with the simple question, "Is there anything you want to add?" She said that the staff knows they have the freedom to ask questions, but also the ability to add new items to the meeting's agenda. Both administrators do not view their role as requiring them to have all the answers or hold all of the expertise. Instead, they asked questions, solicited feedback, and saw their role as finding ways to bring together the collective knowledge and expertise of the entire community.

Question six focused exclusively on the experiences of the teachers and was not posed to the school administrators. Question seven asked the administrators to discuss their knowledge and experience with the practices of distributed leadership. Both

administrators shared that they did not have a great deal of familiarity with the term "distributed leadership." Becky reported that she studied the concept of distributed leadership as part of her classes in her master's degree program. Jim said that he had never used the phrase distributed leadership and had never studied the specific leadership practice.

Question eight had several components. The administrators were first asked if they had ever used the practice of distributed leadership to empower teachers to assume leadership roles within the PLC. If the answer was yes, the administrators were asked several follow-up questions like; how did you determine which teachers to empower and did these teachers receive any specific training? A final question asked the administrator to share their experience utilizing distributed leadership in the development and continued operation of the PLC. Both administrators confirmed that they had distributed leadership authority to the department chairs. A formal process for the selection or the evaluation of potential department chairs was not utilized. The administrators reported that the department chairs were typically teachers who had significant experience, pedagogical knowledge, and a willingness to assume additional responsibilities. Both administrators also indicated that there was no formal training or professional development for the teachers who assumed the department chair positions. Although there was no formalized training, the department chairs did have formal responsibilities. All department chairs were responsible for overseeing the process of curriculum development, textbook selection, and providing subject area expertise to assist the other members of the department. With regards to their experience utilizing the practice of

distributed leadership, the administrators echoed the same language of always trying to say "yes" and look for ways to empower their teachers. According to Jim, "you are always looking to empower your faculty," and if a school leader does not trust their teachers enough to empower them, then they have not hired or developed quality faculty members.

Question nine focused on the teachers' experiences in the school's PLC and was not presented to the administrators. The interview ended with question ten that asked the administrators if the existence of the PLC has improved faculty collaboration within the school. Jim and Becky both agreed that the existence of the PLC had improved the level of faculty collaboration within their school community. Jim noted that the creation of a culture where individual teachers have the freedom to share, develop, and then collaboratively implement ideas that are for "the improvement of the students and the organization" has been a "huge accomplishment for everyone." Becky reported that the collaboration developed through the framework of the PLC has allowed for the creation of a common language throughout all departments. Before the creation of the Pulse meetings, it was commonplace for teachers to only be aware of the academic challenges and corresponding goals within their own departments. For example, the standardized test scores for the science department were only shared with the science teachers. Now, Becky says that she has shared the SAT or ACT scores with the entire faculty, and "everybody sees those, and everyone rallies around (the scores) and says, 'That is a goal that we call can help.'" The resulting collaboration has led to an increase in cross-curricular projects and improved communication within and across the departments and

grade levels. The PLC framework has provided the structure for information to be broadly shared, freely discussed, and improvements made collaboratively.

Teacher Interviews

The initial question posed to the teachers asked for them to share their insights and experiences working in a PLC. All the teachers reported some level of experience working in a PLC. The most common theme were responses centered around the structure of the PLC in the current school community. Three of the five teachers referenced the collaboration and communication that took place between the teachers in their departments, and four teachers referenced taking a leadership role within the department. Often these leadership roles centered around curriculum development and textbook review/selection. Three teachers also shared that when someone attends a conference, the expectation is that they bring back an idea and share it with the larger school community. According to Kate, "we pick something from what we have attended, and we come back and teach that to the staff."

With the second interview question, the teachers had the opportunity to explain the model or system their school used for their PLC. All the teachers mentioned scheduled time for staff or department meetings. Amy, Tony, and Kate all discussed the "in-service" days or professional development days that occur before the start of school and are used to reinforce key messages and affirm goals for the upcoming school year. Tony, along with Jane and Ken, also mentioned the Friday morning staff meetings that occur before school. The Friday morning time is typically reserved for all staff or department meeting times.

Three of the teachers, also referenced the early release days that take place once per quarter and set aside a half-day for department meetings and collaborative discussions. It should be noted that the early release days are a new feature in the school's PLC and at the time of the interviews, the faculty had only experienced one early release day at the end of the first quarter. However, the teachers expressed optimism that the school administration was trying to find more ways to provide the teachers with the time needed to collaborative and identify ways to improve classroom instruction. Another universal response involved the school's practice of having teachers attend conferences. Due to financial constraints, the teachers reported conference attendance takes place on a rotating basis, and as previously noted, it is common practice for the teachers to return from the conferences with at least one idea, concept, or practice to share with the entire PLC.

The goals and purpose of the school's PLC were explored in the third interview question. The almost universal response from the teachers featured a variation of improving classroom instruction as an overarching, schoolwide purpose of the school's PLC. Four of the teachers specifically mentioned improving classroom instruction or teaching practices, and the fifth teacher, Tony, discussed the yearly goal of revising the curriculum, especially the scope and sequence, within the individual departments. Although Ken reported that the administrators had a schoolwide goal to improve the integration of technology in the classrooms, two of the teachers, Jane and Amy, mentioned that they could not identify an overarching schoolwide goal or purpose established independently by the administration. Instead of a specific schoolwide goal,

most of the teachers referenced department-oriented goals. Jane, Tony, and Kate specifically mentioned goals that were framed by their department related to improving classroom instruction. The teachers spoke about a great deal of freedom within the departments to identify and implement best practices to maximize student learning. Kate said that the overarching question is always, "How is this going to bring excellence to our program?" She continued by saying that the department chairs were empowered by the administration to work with the teachers in the department to best answer that question. Kate also reported that although, "we still have to work within the boundaries that were given to us by the administration," there exists a great deal of flexibility within those overarching parameters.

In the fourth question, the teachers were asked to describe any training or professional development they received concerning their role within the PLC. All the teachers reported that they had not received any specific training or professional development related to their role in the school's PLC. Jane said that an administrator would provide the teacher with a list of responsibilities and ask, "Do you feel confident doing this." However, none of the teachers were able to identify any formal or informal training. Four of the responses mentioned that department chairs were selected based on teaching experience or subject area expertise, and the teachers confirmed that a training or orientation program for department chairs did not currently exist. Amy mentioned that she had received training specific to the role of a teacher leader or a department chair when she worked at another school.

Question five focused exclusively on the experiences of the school administrators and was not posed to the teachers. Question six asked the teachers to share their role within the school's PLC. Four of the teachers reported that they currently serve in the role of a department chair, and the fifth teacher, Jane, said that she functions as a virtual co-chair of her department with the tentative plan of assuming the department chair position within the next two years. Tony and Amy also currently serve as mentor teachers. Mentor teachers are assigned to all new staff members regardless of their previous teaching experience. According to Tony, the role of the mentor is to help the new teacher, "understand the details about how things work" regarding the culture of the school. Mentor teachers are assigned my administration and typically share planning periods with the new teacher to allow for regular meetings and opportunities for collaboration. Tony also stressed that a significant component of the mentoring program is to provide encouragement and support for new teachers as they progress through the transition period of joining a new school community.

Question seven asked the teachers to discuss their knowledge and experience with the practices of distributed leadership. Only one of the teachers had any previous experience with the term distributed leadership. Ken had taken leadership courses in college where distributed leadership was discussed as part of the class. The other four teachers were not familiar with the term distributed leadership and asked for a definition of distributed leadership to be provided.

Question eight focused on the administrators and was not presented to the teachers. Question nine had several components. The teachers were first asked if they had

been empowered to assume a leadership role within the school's PLC. If the answer was yes, the teachers were asked several follow-up questions like: who empowered you to assume a leadership position, and did you receive any specific training before assuming the role? A final question asked the teacher to share their experience as a teacher leader within the framework of the PLC. The teachers all reported feeling empowered to share ideas and take initiative, and four of the teachers, Amy, Kate, Ken, and Tony said that they currently hold the position of department chair. Jane reported that she works closely with the chair of her department and functions almost as a "co-chair" of the department. The teachers were also unanimous in two other responses with all reporting that the school administrators empowered them to assume their current leadership position. Kate stressed that the current school administrators had adopted more of a flattened hierarchy rather than the "more vertical paradigm" of previous administrators.

Additionally, the teachers all reported that they did not receive any specific training to prepare them for their current leadership role. Instead, every teacher reported that empowerment decisions were based on a teacher's level of experience rather than the completion of a specific professional development program. The department chairs noted that their experience leading their respective departments had been positive. Amy and Kate mentioned that the teachers in their departments are all eager to assist in any major projects, especially curriculum or textbook reviews. Amy conveyed the collaborative nature of her department with more of a flattened hierarchy. She said that she "does not consider the other teachers to be under her," but she does lead the department meetings, provide guidance and direction to less experienced teachers. Tony captured the

enthusiasm within his department meetings by saying, "We get excited about the ideas and the collaborative work that's going on." The prevailing sentiment from every teacher was that they feel empowered and trusted to make decisions, take initiative, and demonstrate leadership within the school's PLC framework.

The interview ended with question ten that asked the teachers if the existence of the PLC had improved faculty collaboration within the school. If teachers responded in the affirmative, they were asked to share their experiences regarding how collaboration has been improved and who was involved in the collaborative efforts. Every teacher reported that they believe the existence of a PLC had improved faculty collaboration within the school. Every teacher also said that collaborative efforts were often more focused among teachers in the same department, and three teachers said they commonly collaborate on their department's curriculum. Kate also referenced a collaborative, cross-curricular world hunger project that involved components from the math, science, and geography classes. According to Kate, cross-curriculum collaboration is encouraged by the school administrators, but they allow the teachers to work together to determine best how to achieve those collaborative goals. The other teachers all joined Kate in reporting that they believe they have been empowered by the school administrators to take initiative and try new things within their individual classrooms and the broader departments. Ken said that the administrators often tell the teachers, "if you find something that you think is going to improve your teaching in your classroom, then we will help you go in that direction." Tony echoed Ken's statements and said that the administrators often "give the green light" for teachers to try new ideas when they have

demonstrated the initiative to research and propose something new. According to the teachers, trust is foundational to their empowerment. The teachers believe that the administrators trust them to work within the overall arching framework of the school's core values and mission. Kate, Ken, and Tony concluded by saying that the school administrators actively encouraged collaboration among the teachers.

Observation

I observed a meeting of two grade level lead teachers, Megan and Erica, who had been given responsibility for organizing the January term (J-term) activities. Becky, one of the school administrators interviewed as part of this study also attended the meeting. The meeting began with a discussion of the experience of the J-term from the previous year and the lessons that were learned. Last year marked the inaugural year for the implementation of the J-term concept, and the teachers were looking for ways to enhance the learning experience for their students. The meeting progressed to a discussion of class ideas for this year's J-term. Becky used a laptop to organize a tentative J-term class schedule and keep track of notes from the meeting. Megan and Erica also took handwritten notes. Most of the meeting focused on how to best leverage the strengths and interest of the other teachers during the J-term week. Although Becky holds a formal administrative position within the school, the meeting was very collaborative, and all three faculty members freely shared ideas. During the meeting, Becky asked questions to create increased clarity surrounding certain ideas or suggestions, but she was not controlling or domineering in any way. When the bell rang, the meeting ended as students would begin entering their first period classes within ten minutes. Before Megan and

Erica left, Becky shared a few quick thoughts and suggested a time to schedule a meeting to share the initial J-term ideas with the other faculty members. Everyone seemed excited about the J-term ideas that had been developed and were eager to begin the process of further developing plans through collaboration with the other members of the faculty.

Summary

The process of data analysis revealed codes such as *empowerment, collaboration, leadership, academic achievement, professional development, department chairs, student achievement, and teacher learning*. Three central themes emerged through the analysis of the data by coding the interview and observation transcripts and comparing the information to the collected field notes.

1) A collaborative culture.

2) Trust between administrators and teachers.

3) Administrator empowerment of teachers.

All research participants believed in the collaborative culture that was a characteristic of the school's PLC. The collaborative culture was based on trust that allowed the school administrators to empower the teacher leaders within the school community. Additionally, the teachers felt that they were not only empowered but also encouraged, to be innovative and collaboratively find ways to improve teaching practices and enhance student learning through their individual departments.

Although most of the research participants were not familiar with the term distributed leadership, it was evident that the principles of the leadership practice were being utilized in the school's PLC. The school administrators provided the overarching

vision and direction for the school community, but they allowed the teachers great freedom to work within the boundaries of the established vision and goals. The administrators also viewed themselves as facilitators who asked questions, guided conversations, and relied on the specific subject area expertise of the teacher leaders they empowered. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of the school's culture was evident by the lack of reported tension between the teacher leaders, specifically department chairs, and the teachers who did not have the same title.

Although the school's PLC seems to be functioning well, it must be noted that, according to the teachers and administrators, the main criteria for selecting department chairs was a combination of teaching experience and subject area expertise. Additionally, none of the teachers reported receiving any professional development or leadership training pursuant to the empowerment they had received from the school administrators. McKenzie and Locke (2014) noted the need to provide potential teacher leaders with specific instruction to further their leadership development. In the school's PLC structure, the department chairs were often tasked with working with other faculty members to improve classroom instruction and increase student learning. Providing training in andragogy, the teaching of adult learners, can serve to enhance the effectiveness of teacher leaders functioning in a distributed leadership model (McKenzie & Locke, 2014).

Research Project as an Outcome

Following the process of data collection and analysis, I created a research project that is a professional development program for school administrators. The goal will be to provide school administrators with the tools they need to identify and train potential

teacher leaders within their school community. The research demonstrated the lack of a formalized identification process for the identification of potential teacher leaders within the school. Years of experience and a willingness to accept responsibility seemed to be the primary qualifications. The research also showed that there was a lack of training to equip identified teacher leaders to serve effectively within their school communities. The professional development program is designed to provide researched based practices that can be used by school administrators to identify future teacher leaders. Administrators will also be equipped to provide identified teacher leaders with the continued training and staff development needed for the teacher leaders to be successful in their new roles.

Section 3: The Project

The faculty at a state-chartered independent school in Central Ohio worked in a school community that lacked a collaborative culture in which teachers and administrators were actively committed to professional development and accepted collective responsibility for the achievement of all learners. The practice of distributed leadership used within the framework of a PLC could contribute to the development of a collaborative school culture and the acceptance of a collective responsibility for student learning among all teachers and administrators. The creation of a professional development program would provide school administrators with research-based practices to assist them in the identification and development of future teacher leaders. The program would also enable school administrators to give teacher leaders the continued training needed to allow them to be successful in assuming leadership roles within a PLC and the greater school community. Section 3 includes the program rationale, a review of the literature supporting the program design, a description of the program, plans for program evaluation, and anticipated implications including the prospect for social change.

Rationale

The purpose of this study was to address the problem of a lack of professional development in a state-chartered, independent school in Central Ohio. According to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE, (2015), schools that lack a PLC and a collective commitment to professional development are characterized by less effective classroom teaching and lower levels of student achievement. The ODE Professional Development

Guide stated that professional development is most effective in achieving improved

classroom teaching practices and increasing student performance when it is conducted in

a PLC characterized by a collaborative culture and collective desire for school

improvement (ODE, 2015).

Research was conducted at a state-chartered, independent school in Central Ohio

with a functioning PLC that followed the practices of distributed leadership. Findings

from this qualitative study demonstrated that all research participants believed that a

collaborative culture was a core characteristic of the school's PLC. Furthermore, the

teachers reported being encouraged and empowered to find innovative ways to improve

teaching practices and student learning through collaborative efforts within their

departments. Although the school's PLC appeared to be working effectively, both

teachers and administrators believed that the main criteria for selecting teacher leaders

was a combination of subject area knowledge and years of experience. None of the

identified teacher leaders received any professional development or leadership training to

prepare them to assume the leadership roles they had been given within the PLC.

The creation of a professional development program for school administrators

may provide the administrators with the tools they need to identify potential teacher

leaders within their school communities. Additionally, the program was designed to

equip school administrators with research-based practices to provide identified teacher

leaders with the skills needed to excel in their new leadership roles within the school's

PLC. Often teacher leaders in a PLC are responsible for working with other faculty

members to improve classroom instruction and student learning. Providing new teacher

leaders with training in andragogy can serve to enhance their leadership development and their effectiveness when working with other teachers in the PLC (McKenzie & Locke, 2014).

Review of the Literature

Several sources were used to collect the information necessary to support the development of the professional development program. Academic databases available through the Walden University library, such as Education Resources Information Center, ProQuest Central, and the Thoreau Multi-Database Search, were used to identify peer-reviewed research. A search of the academic databases was facilitated using a combination of terms such as *adult learning*, *professional development*, *teacher leaders*, and *school administrators/principals*.

The research findings demonstrated that the school's PLC, which followed the practices of distributed leadership, was characterized by a collaborative culture, an environment of trust between teachers and administrators, and the empowerment of teachers by school administrators. Although the school's PLC seemed to be functioning well, the administrators lacked an established system to identify new teacher leaders within the school community. Additionally, there was a lack of professional development and leadership training for teacher leaders who had been empowered by school administrators to assume the role of teacher leaders within the school's PLC.

School administrators play a vital role in facilitating the acceptance of leadership roles by others within their school community and fostering the development of a culture of trust, collaboration, and empowerment (Huggins, Klar, Hammonds, & Buskey, 2016).

However, according to Weiner and Woulfin (2018), school administrators are often not adequately equipped to identify and develop teacher leaders within their school communities. Huggins et al. concluded that administrators need professional development programs to ensure that they are equipped to identify and develop the leadership capacity of others within their school. An effective program designed to train teacher leaders to work with other faculty members within a PLC serves to enhance the quality of future professional development conducted within the PLC framework (Kennedy, 2016).

Characteristics of Professional Development

The purpose of professional development is to "shift learning to educators to enhance learning for students" (McCray, 2018, p. 583). The goal of the professional development program developed from this study was to shift learning to the school administrators in a manner that would allow them to develop the leadership capacity of teacher leaders within their school community and enhance the functionality of their PLC through the practice of distributed leadership. Professional development programs have become synonymous with efforts to improve teacher performance and student learning.

Researchers have identified five core features or best practices for high-quality professional development: content focused, based on active learning, collective participation, coherence, and sustained duration (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Desimone & Pak, 2017). Content-focused programs connect the material to the students (Desimone & Garet, 2015). When professional development is targeted toward school administrators, the teachers are viewed as the intended students of the course material. Professional

development programs that incorporate active learning provide an opportunity for teachers to become learners, and active learning programs have been demonstrated to be more effective in transforming teaching practices (Johnson, Sondergeld, & Walton 2017). When active learning is combined with collective participation in a professional development setting, teachers engage with the material in a collaborative manner and construct their own knowledge from the course materials (Brown & Militello, 2016; Olofson & Garnett, 2018). In addition to collective participation, it is important for teachers to be given time during the professional development process to engage with the material presented and reflect on new information that can impact their current teaching practice (Xu, 2016). Xu (2016) found a statistically significant positive impact on school performance when educators were allowed time for engagement and reflection rather than packing a professional development workshop with as much content as possible.

Professional development that is focused exclusively on content is often of limited effectiveness (Kennedy, 2016). Programs that demonstrate coherence and alignment of the goals and values of the school community are often more impactful (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Professional development programs that adopt a universal approach to teacher training have been found to be ineffective (Minor, Desimone, Lee, & Hochberg, 2016). Instead, effective programs are tailored to meet the needs of the individual school culture with input from school administrators and teacher leaders operating in a PLC (Korthagen, 2017). A recent trend in U.S. schools has been the adoption of professional development programs that have a sustained duration of at least 20 contact hours instead of the once popular half-day workshops (Desimone & Garet,

2015). When professional development workshops rush to cover as much content as possible, the ensuing results are reduced levels of empowerment and efficacy (Fox, Muccio, White, & Tian, 2015).

Developing Teacher Leaders

Teacher leadership development is an intentional process designed to increase the leadership capacity of teachers and improve their practice of leadership within the school community (Smylie & Eckert, 2018). A significant positive relationship exists between the level of teacher leadership and school improvement outcomes like student achievement, faculty job satisfaction, and the existence of a positive school culture (Tsai, 2015). Teacher leaders often work in collaboration with school administrators and fellow teachers to improve teaching practices with the goal of increasing student learning, and as a result of the positive impact teacher leaders can have upon a school community, it is recommended that leadership training is incorporated into professional development programs (Tsai, 2015). Additionally, school administrators play a pivotal role in the development of teacher leaders, and administrators need to receive training in leadership development (Smylie & Eckert, 2018).

In many school settings, it can be difficult for school administrators to relinquish the traditional top-down or hierarchal models of school leadership (Weiner, 2016). To develop teacher leaders, school administrators must move away from strictly hierarchical leadership structures (Olivier & Huffman, 2016). Teacher leadership can either be enhanced or hindered by the disposition of the school administrator (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). According to Weiner (2016), professional development programs are

needed to provide instruction to school administrators to help them understand the benefits of distributed leadership and implement a shared decision-making structure within their school community. Several studies have demonstrated significant positive impacts of using professional development programs to enhance the ability of school leaders to identify and develop teacher leaders. Miller, Goddard, Kim, Goddard, and Schroeder (2016) found that leadership development programs could have substantial impacts on the efficacy of school leaders especially related to their ability to manage change through instructional leadership. Furthermore, when school administrators demonstrated greater instructional leadership, the levels of teacher collaboration and efficacy also increased (Goddard, Goddard, Kim, & Miller, 2015).

Welch and Hodge (2018) found that having school administrators examine school leadership models allowed them to use the information to identify leadership competencies specific to teacher leaders within their unique school community. The development of the leadership competencies led to improved clarity about what is expected of a leader within the school, the creation of a shared language regarding school leadership, an improved process for the identification of future teacher leaders within the school community, and improved professional development programs to develop newly identified teacher leaders (Welch & Hodge, 2018). Having a clear definition of teacher leadership that is shared between the school administrators and the teachers plays a significant role in the development and efficacy of teacher leaders (Klein et al., 2018). The goal is for teacher leaders and administrators to work together in a collective effort to

create a culture of continued teacher learning that will result in improved learning for all students (Olivier & Huffman, 2016).

It takes time for teachers to transition from a classroom teacher to a leadership role within the school community (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017). Teacher leaders are characterized as possessing a strong drive to ensure the learning of all students and exhibit a willingness to experiment with new teaching practices (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015). Over time, teacher leadership becomes more of an identity that is embraced by the teacher rather than a formal title or position (Poekert, Alexandrou, & Shannon, 2016); leadership becomes an expression of who the teacher is rather than what they do (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015). In the absence of an official leadership title, the support of the school administrator lends a measure of validity and authority to the work of the teacher leaders (Cooper et al., 2016). However, the administrator must be careful not to take control and stifle the contributions of teacher leaders; instead, a balance must be found between being overly controlling and completely absent (Cooper et al., 2016). Also, depending on the specific school culture, it could be beneficial for the school administrator to provide empowered teacher leaders with a quasiformal teacher leadership title and a measure of authority over a specific grade level or department (Supovitz, 2018).

Some teacher leaders view their leadership responsibilities as a compartmentalized task that can become a burden that they would willingly relinquish (Wenner & Campbell, 2018). The goal of providing school administrators with a professional development program focused on the identification and training of teacher

leaders is to have teacher leaders develop an identity in which they embrace their leadership role as part of who they are within the school community (Wenner & Campbell, 2018). Teacher leaders who are in a supportive environment where their leadership contributions are encouraged and appreciated have the capacity to play a pivotal role in school improvement programs and initiatives (Poekert et al., 2016).

Project Description

The project was a professional development workshop designed for school administrators. Following the recommendations of Desimone and Garet (2015), the professional development program was designed to have a sustained focus and deliver in excess of 20 contact hours by providing three full days of instruction. A copy of the planned daily schedule for the workshop is included in Appendix A. The program design also provides school administrators time for reflection and collaboration. Once the material is presented, the administrators are provided with instructions to consider ways to apply the discussed ideas in their specific school community, or the leaders gather into groups to collaboratively engage with the course materials. Treating the school administrators as active participants in the professional development program will allow for increase efficacy (Fox et al., 2015).

The professional development workshop will seek to assist school administrators in answering four central questions:

1. What is distributed leadership, and why should we develop teacher leaders?
2. What if we developed teacher leaders within our school community?
3. How do we identify and develop teacher leaders?

4. What needs to take place for us to implement a program of teacher leadership?

School administrators attending the workshop will be provided with information designed to foster an understanding of the model of distributed leadership within the framework of a PLC. The goal is to teach school administrators the benefits of distributed leadership and encourage the adoption of a similar leadership structure by identifying, developing, and empowering teacher leaders within the framework of their school's PLC. The workshop will take school administrators through the process of identifying the key qualities or values of their school community and the key characteristics they want to see in their teacher leaders. The participants will be tasked with writing a definition of teacher leadership that incorporates the key qualities previously identified. The school's definition of teacher leadership will be specific to the individual school community and will become the foundational component of the school's profile of a teacher leader. The profile of a teacher leader will help ensure the alignment of a shared understanding of teacher leadership for school administrators and teachers, which will improve the efficacy of the teacher leaders within the school community (Klein et al., 2018). Administrators will also receive instruction developing a system to evaluate the leadership experience and knowledge of potential teacher leaders. The development of a leadership evaluation rubric will allow school administrators to customize the future leadership training of identified teacher leaders as a one-size fits all approach to teacher leadership development often proves ineffective (Minor et al., 2016).

Project Resources

The following resources will be needed to conduct the professional development workshop previously described. The most significant resource is time. The workshop is designed to take place over three consecutive days. In an ideal situation, the workshop could be scheduled during a preplanned school break or the weeks immediately before or after the regular school year. Scheduling the workshop during days when students would not be on campus would reduce costs because there would not be a need to hire any substitutes.

Other necessary resources would include a room designed to hold at least 30 individuals. Many school classrooms would meet this need, but it would be nice to be able to use a large space to provide more room for the participants to form groups and collaborate during the workshop. In addition to the physical space, the room would need to have tables and chairs, and it would be ideal if round tables were available to promote increased collaboration among participants during the workshop. Other room or facilities needs would include a computer and projector for the workshop presenter and a wireless internet connection for workshop participants to be able to use personal laptops. It is not estimated that a microphone or other sound system will be necessary because the size of the group is relatively small.

Each participant will be provided with a three-ring binder that will allow them to keep all handouts and other workshop materials organized. In addition to the three-ring binders, the participants will be able to use pens, highlighters, sticky notes, and other materials that will be made available during the workshop. Finally, it would be nice to be

able to provide refreshments for all workshop participants. Coffee, water, and perhaps some fruit or other snacks would be a much-appreciated gesture because the participants will always be responsible for their own lunches.

All professional development workshops have some inherent costs for the school district. In part, this project has been designed to minimize costs and therefore, eliminate a possible barrier to conducting the workshop. Typically, most schools will have the facilities described above and can host the professional development program on their campus with little or no added costs. The computer and other technology needs are also common on many school campuses, and the costs for binders, pens, highlighters, and sticky notes are minimal. Although it would be nice if the participants were offered coffee, water, and snacks throughout the day, these "hospitality" expenses would not be considered absolute necessities. The main costs of the workshop would be the time of the school administrators attending as participants, and district superintendents would need to be supportive of the professional development program to allow their school administrators the three days necessary to complete the program. If the professional development workshop were scheduled to allow for school administrators to attend when students were not on campus, the need to hire substitutes would be eliminated, and the ability of the school to host the workshop on site would be increased. Under these circumstances, the entire workshop, including refreshments, could be conducted for less than $500. Additional information and specific details for the professional development workshop are included in Appendix A.

Project Evaluation Plan

The project will be evaluated through a summative evaluation model. Summative

evaluations are used to evaluate the quality of the professional development experience at

the conclusion of the workshop. A summative evaluation would serve to provide

information regarding the degree to which the professional development program

provided useful content and a beneficial experience for the participants. At the end of the

workshop, the school administrators will be asked to complete a questionnaire that will

provide them with the opportunity to provide feedback and review the professional

development program.

The questions on the evaluation form are designed to evaluate the quality of the

professional development program in relation to:

1. providing school administrators with an understanding of the model of

   distributed leadership and the potential benefits of teacher leaders,

2. assisting school administrators in developing a definition of teacher leadership

   specific to their school community, and

3. assisting school administrators in developing a method to identify potential

   teacher leaders and provide for their continued development.

The purpose of the summative evaluation process is to use the feedback of school

administrators to improve the quality of the workshop materials and increase the overall

effectiveness of the professional development program. A copy of the summative

evaluation worksheet that will be presented to all workshop participants is located at the

end of Appendix A.

Project Implications

The purpose of this research was to investigate how the practice of distributed leadership, functioning within the framework of a PLC, contributes to the formation of a collaborative school culture that is characterized by the collective responsibility for the achievement of all learners. The research findings determined the design and content of the professional development project. The project includes instruction and materials created to assist school administrators with the adoption of distributed leadership framework within a school's PLC. The project was also designed to allow school administrators to develop a definition of teacher leadership specific to their school community and create a formalized system to identify potential teacher leaders within their faculty. The final goal of the project was to equip school administrators to provide identified teacher leaders with the continued training and professional development necessary for the teacher leaders to be successful in their new roles within the PLC.

The development and empowerment of teacher leaders within a school community have the potential to positively contribute to social change by increasing the effectiveness of a school's PLC and fostering the development of a collaborative culture where all faculty members assume a collective responsibility to improve teaching practices and elevate the academic achievement of all learners.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of the project study was the ability to engage with multiple school administrators and teachers in the school community where the research was conducted. Although the sample size was small, the number of participants represented a sizable portion of the school's faculty. All the participants seemed more than willing to assist me in the research and responded to requests for clarification during the transcript reviews. The engagement of the participants throughout the research process provided a greater sense of clarity regarding their individual experiences in a school community where distributed leadership was practiced within the framework of a PLC.

Although previously described as a strength, the sample size was also a limitation of the project study. The school community where the research was conducted was small, and the result was a relatively small sample size. The smaller sample size combined with the qualitative nature of the study limited the ability to generalize to other school communities.

The professional development workshop that was developed from the research data also represented a strength of the project study. The 3-day workshop was designed to provide school administrators with training and instruction needed to understand the framework of distributed leadership and identify and develop teacher leaders. The workshop was designed to incorporate significant amounts of time for participants to engage with the material and reflect on ways the ideas and information presented in the workshop could be used within their unique school community.

A limiting factor of the professional development workshop is the 3-day structure of the program. For many school administrators, it can be difficult to be away from campus and fully engaged in a workshop for 3 consecutive days. The realization of this limitation is another indicator of the need for school communities to adopt a model of distributed leadership that would allow members of the formal leadership team to focus on professional development during the school year. However, an alternative approach would be to allow for the professional development program to be presented on 3 nonconsecutive days that span the course of a typical school semester. Perhaps the most effective time to schedule the 3-day workshop would be at the conclusion of the school year, which would provide school administrators time over the summer months to more fully reflect on the material that was presented and to develop ways to incorporate the ideas into their school community.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The purpose of this study was to address the problem of a lack of professional development in a state-chartered, independent school in Central Ohio. In the process of addressing the problem, I collected qualitative data in the form of personal interviews and observations to determine whether the practice of distributed leadership within the framework of a PLC contributed to the development of a collaborative school culture and the acceptance of collective responsibility for student learning among the teachers and administrators.

The focus of my research was on the experiences of the school administrators and teachers working in a school community that had adopted the practice of distributed

leadership within a functioning PLC. An alternative approach to the problem could have been a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative data and quantitative data gathered from surveys and other possible sources. Rather than relying on the experiences of faculty, a different approach could have included quantitative data related to academic achievement to examine the impact of distributed leadership within a functioning PLC.

The project that was developed from the research was a 3-day professional workshop designed to provide instruction to school administrators regarding the model of distributed leadership and the identification and development of teacher leaders within their school community. An alternative approach to the project would have been the creation of a professional development workshop that focused on potential teacher leaders. The workshop could have incorporated information to help teachers develop the skills necessary to be successful teacher leaders and transition into leadership roles within their school communities.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

This research project was a very challenging yet rewarding task. Each stage was more complex and challenging than I had previously imagined. At the start of the process, I naively assumed that identifying a problem and proposing a research study would be a simple task. At the time, I did not understand the clarity required to identify a specific problem and draft the focused research questions necessary to identify a research-based solution. Additionally, the process of completing the literature reviews stretched my ability to locate, analyze, and interpret the literature that supported the research.

Conducting the research was a new experience. Before the completion of this study, I had never performed a research study other than informal class projects in my undergraduate studies. I was not familiar with the IRB process or the detailed protections necessary to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical manner while safeguarding the identities of the research participants. The process of completing the personal interviews and observations was an enjoyable experience. Collecting the experiences and viewpoints of other educators during the personal interviews was perhaps my favorite portion of the entire research process. However, the amount of work required to create transcriptions of the audio recordings from the interviews was daunting. I never realized the amount of typed text that could be created in a single 45-minute interview. The analysis of the research data and the development of the project has been the most enjoyable portion of the project. As a school administrator, I have some experience leading limited professional development programs, and the scope of a 3-day professional development workshop allowed me to build on my previous experiences.

The work required to complete this study has improved my abilities as a scholar. I have more confidence in my analytical skills and writing ability, and I now have a much greater appreciation for the work required to produce any research study. Perhaps the biggest lesson has been the importance of continually seeking to refine and improve the finished product. In my previous academic degree programs, I was quick to complete work with little if any revisions. The experience of completing this project has taught me

the value of perseverance and continued reflection in the effort to improve the quality of my work.

<div align="center">**Reflection on Importance of the Work**</div>

The implementation of a model of distributed leadership provides school administrators with the potential to add layers of instructional leadership throughout their school community. Distributed leadership is not the delegation of unwanted tasks or a system by which administrators can require their teachers to assume additional responsibilities. Instead, the model of distributed leadership functions best within the framework of a PLC in which the faculty have embraced a collaborative culture and a collective responsibility for improving teaching practices and student achievement.

The research conducted for this study demonstrated that school administrators could use the principles of distributed leadership to identify and empower teacher leaders within the existing PLC structure. For the system of distributed leadership and the empowerment of teacher leaders to enhance the functionality of a PLC, it is necessary for school administrators to receive professional development that will equip them to identify and develop teacher leaders within their school community. Additionally, it is vital for school administrators to be trained to provide continual support to identified teacher leaders as they transition into a new leadership role within the school community.

<div align="center">**Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**</div>

The adoption of the principles of distributed leadership has the potential to enhance the functionality of a PLC. Previous research demonstrated that implementing the practice of distributed leadership within a PLC framework results in collaborative

cultures that foster teacher efficacy, improved teaching practices, and increased academic achievement (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Mintzes et al., 2013; Schneider et al., 2012). The research conducted for this study demonstrated the need for professional development programs to assist school administrators in the identification and development of teacher leaders within their school communities. The greatest impact from this study is the creation of the professional development workshop where school administrators will be equipped with research-based tools and practices designed to help them implement the model of distributed leadership, identify teacher leaders, and support their development within the PLC framework.

The focus of this qualitative study was on the experiences of the school administrators and teachers working in a school that had adopted the principles of distributed leadership within the framework of a PLC. Future studies could focus on the collection of quantitative data related to student achievement in schools that follow the practice of distributed leadership within a functioning PLC. Additional research needs to be done to determine the effectiveness of professional development programs designed to equip school administrators to use distributed leadership to identify, empower, and develop teacher leaders within a PLC framework.

Conclusion

The combination of national, state, and district level educational programs, mandates, and requirements have resulted in secondary schools becoming increasingly complex systems. The ability of a single school administrator to successfully navigate and manage a school community has vanished in the intricate web of legislative

requirements. Gone are the days of the heroic school leader who could effectively

manage all administrative tasks and serve as the supreme educational leader for the entire

school community.

      The development of PLCs in schools across the country has allowed for the

development of collective school cultures in which the faculty take collective

responsibility to work collaboratively to improve the learning of all students. The

adoption of the practices of distributed leadership within the framework of a functioning

PLC allows for school administrators to empower select faculty members to assume the

mantle of educational leaders. The increasing complexity of school systems is countered

with layers of educational leadership throughout the school community. Schools must

invest in professional development programs that assist school administrators in

implementing a system of distributed leadership and providing them with research-based

practices needed to identify, empower, and develop future teacher leaders.

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Appendix A: The Project

Developing Teacher Leadership through Distributed Leadership

The following pages provide an outline of a professional development workshop

designed to provide school administrators with the following.

1. An understanding of distributed leadership within the framework of a PLC.

2. An understanding of teacher leadership, and how teach leaders can benefit a

    school community.

3. The tools necessary to define, identify, and develop teacher leaders in their

    individual school community.

4. The steps necessary to implement a program of teacher leadership in their school

    community.

Detailed Workshop Schedule – Day One

Time	Topic	Activity
Day One		
8:00 – 8:15	Check-in	Participants arrive, check-in, receive notebook with all applicable handouts and workshop materials.
8:15 – 8:30	Welcome and Introductions	Welcome everyone and give a brief summary of my background in education. Introduce the theme for the workshop and the topics for Day 1. Finally, provide a time for each participate to give their name and a brief introduction.
8:30 – 9:30	Professional Learning Communities – What is a PLC?	Ask all participants to write their own definitions of PLC (5 minutes). Share several participant definitions. Present and discuss the definition of PLC from the literature – six key PLC characteristics (DuFour et al., 2006).
9:30 – 10:00	Individual Activity	Participants will be asked to evaluate the culture of their school community based upon the six key PLC characteristics previously discussed.
10:00 – 10:15	Break	
10:15 – 10:45	Small group activity	Participants will gather in groups of three or four and share insights from the self-evaluation of their school community. After 15 minutes, the groups will share their answers in a collective discussion among all participants
10:45 – 11:45	Distributed Leadership	Ask all participants to write their own definitions of distributed leadership (5 minutes). Share several participant definitions. Present and discuss the definition of distributed leadership from the literature (Baloglu, 2012 & Bush & Glover, 2012)

11:45 – 12:00	Key question #1 What is distributed leadership, and why should we develop teacher leaders?	Participants will have 15 minutes to draft their own answer to the question before taking a break for lunch.
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch	Participants are on their own for lunch
1:00 – 1:30	Small group activity	Participants will gather in groups of three or four and share their individual answers to key question #1. After 15 minutes, the groups will share their answers in a collective discussion among all participants.
1:30 – 2:30	Teacher Leadership and Teacher Leaders	What is teacher leadership, and what are the characteristics of teacher leaders? Ask participants to write their own definition of teacher leadership and brainstorm a list of characteristics of teacher leaders (5 minutes). Share several participant definitions. Present and discuss the definition of teacher leadership from the literature (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015 & Poekert, Alexandrou, & Shannon, 2016).
2:30 – 2:45	Individual Workshop Reflections	Participants will be provided an opportunity to reflect on the material presented in the workshop and write reflections about how the material could impact their educational practice and school community.
2:45 – 3:00	Closing Reflections and Sharing	Participants will have the opportunity to share their most important insight or takeaway from day one.
3:00	Dismiss for the Day	

Detailed Workshop Schedule – Day Two

Day Two		
8:00 – 8:30	Welcome and Review	Welcome participants. Provide a time to answer questions and share reflections from the previous day.
8:30 – 9:15	Key question #2. What if we developed teacher leaders within our school community?	Participants will gather in small groups of three or four. Participants will have 15 minutes to draft their individual answers to the question before sharing with the other group members. After 15 minutes of small group discussion, the groups will share their answers in a collective discussion among all participants.
9:15 – 10:00	Identifying Teacher Leaders – The Importance of Leadership Competencies for Teacher Leaders	Discuss the importance of identifying and developing leadership competencies for teacher leaders. The creation of improved clarity regarding what is expected of a leader within the school and the creation of a shared language regarding school leadership between the teacher leaders and school administrators (Welch & Hodge, 2018 & Klein et al., 2018).
10:00 – 10:15	Break	
10:15 – 11:45	Small Group Activity – Identifying the Leadership Competencies of Teacher Leaders Key Question #3 How do we identify and develop teacher leaders?	Participants will work in groups of three or four to identify the necessary leadership competencies of teacher leaders within their unique school community. The goal is the development of a chart of necessary characteristics and skills for teacher leaders in their school
11:45 – 12:00	Questions and Reflections on the Moring Session	Participants will have the opportunity to debrief (ask questions and share information with other groups) before the lunch break.
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch	Participants are on their own for lunch
1:00 – 1:15	Key Question #3	Participants will be reminded of Key Question #3. Participants will

	How do we identify and develop teacher leaders?	individually evaluate the group work that was completed prior to lunch.
1:15 – 2:00	Small Group Activity – Refinement of Leadership Competencies for Teacher Leaders	Participants will share individual evaluations with their small group. Groups will consider all feedback as they work to refine the teacher leadership competencies for their unique school community.
2:00 – 2:30	Group Presentations of Leadership Competencies for Teacher Leaders	Each group will present and explain the chart of characteristics and skills necessary for teacher leaders to be successful within their school community.
2:30 – 2:45	Individual Workshop Reflections	Participants will be provided an opportunity to reflect on the material presented in the workshop and write reflections about how the material could impact their educational practice and school community.
2:45 – 3:00	Closing Reflections and Sharing	Participants will have the opportunity to share their most important insight or takeaway from day two.
3:00	Dismiss for the Day	

Detailed Workshop Schedule – Day Three

Day Three		
8:00 – 8:30	Welcome and Review	Welcome participants. Provide a time to answer questions and share reflections from the previous two days.
8:30 – 9:00	Identifying Teacher Leaders within Your School Community	Participants will review the teacher leadership competencies developed on day two. Each participant will be asked to complete a preliminary evaluation of three to five potential teacher leaders within their school community using the chart of necessary characteristics and skills for teacher leaders in their school they developed during day two.
9:00 – 9:15	Questions and Participant Insights	Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and share insights regarding the preliminary evaluation of potential teacher leaders within their school community.
9:15 – 10:00	Supporting Teacher Leaders	Discuss the importance of school administrator support for teacher leaders (Cooper et al., 2016). Examine ways in which administrators can empower teacher leaders while not abdicating their leadership role within the school community (Cooper et al., 2016). Debate the use of quasi-formal leadership titles to add a measure of authority for teacher leaders with grade level or department responsibilities (Supovitz, 2018).
10:00 – 10:15	Break	
10:15 – 11:00	Individual and Small Group Activities	Participants will gather in small groups of three or four. Participants will have 20 minutes to identify specific actions regarding how they can support the development of teacher leaders within their school community. Individual responses will then be shared in the small groups.

		After 15 minutes of small group discussion, the groups will share their answers in a collective discussion among all participants.
11:00 – 11:45	Putting It All Together Key Question #4 What needs to take place for us to implement a program of teacher leadership?	Participants will work in small groups to identify specific steps that need to be taken to implement a program of teacher leadership based upon the principles of distributed leadership within a school community.
11:45 – 12:00	Participant Questions and Share Responses	Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and share responses regarding the development and support of teacher leaders.
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch	Participants are on their own for lunch
1:00 – 1:45	Individual and Small Group Activity - School Culture and PLC Evaluations	Participants will be asked to review the evaluations of the culture of their school community based upon the six key PLC characteristics previously discussed. How can the practice of distributed leadership and the development of teacher leaders impact your school's culture and PLC? Participants will have 15 minutes to review the day one evaluation and answer the question. Individual responses will then be shared in the small groups before being shared in a final collective discussion. After 15 minutes of small group discussion, the groups will share their answers in a collective discussion among all participants.
1:45 – 2:00	Participant Questions	Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions regarding the material covered during the previous three days.
2:00 – 2:15	Final Individual Workshop Reflections	Participants will be provided an opportunity to reflect on the material presented in the workshop and write

		reflections about how the material could impact their educational practice and school community.
2:15 – 2:45	Closing Celebration	Participants will have the opportunity to share their most important insight or takeaway from the previous three days.
2:45 – 3:00	Workshop Evaluation	Participants will complete the workshop evaluation form.
3:00	Dismiss for the Day	All participants will receive a certificate.

Day 1 – Handout 1
Professional Learning Community (PLC)
Definitions and Characteristics

Write your definition of a PLC.

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Key Characteristics of a PLC

Identify five or six key characteristics of a PLC.

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Day 1 – Handout 2
Key Characteristics of a PLC

DuFour et al. (2006) discovered six central characteristics of an effective PLC:

1. A collaboratively developed and collectively ensured vision and commitment to ensure the learning of each student within the school or district.

2. A faculty culture marked by collaborative efforts that focus on refining classroom practices to increase the learning of all students.

3. Collective inquiry to develop a shared understanding of the current school reality and discover best practices to improve classroom instruction and student learning.

4. An action-oriented framework where team members value learning by doing and seek to effect change through the implementation of discoveries made through collective inquiries and collaboratively developed learning objectives.

5. A commitment from all faculty members, not just those in positions of formal authority, to revoke complacency with the status quo and continually seek new methods that allow for continuous improvements in the learning community.

6. A results-oriented approach where established learning goals are consistently evaluated to identify areas for improvement in student learning and determine the strengths and weaknesses in teaching practices.

Day 1 – Handout 3
The PLC in Your School

Use the table below to evaluate the PLC in your school according to the six characteristics identified in the previous handout.

Characteristic	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
1. A collective vision and commitment to ensure the learning of all students.				
2. A collaborative faculty culture focused on improving classroom practices to ensure the learning of all students.				
3. Shared curiosity to understand the current school reality and discover best practices to improve instruction and student learning.				
4. A culture where faculty members value learning and seek to effect change by implementing the discoveries made through collective inquiry and collaboration.				
5. A commitment from all faculty members to revoke complacency and continually seek methods that allow for continuous improvements in the learning community.				
6. A results-oriented approach where learning goals are consistently evaluated to identify areas for student improvement and determine the best practices for classroom instruction.				

Day 1 – Handout 4
Distributed Leadership
Definitions and Characteristics

Write your definition of distributed leadership.

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Characteristics of Distributed Leadership

Notes:

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Day 1 – Handout 5
Distributed Leadership
Definitions and Characteristics

Key Question #1

What is distributed leadership, and why should we develop teacher leaders?

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Write your definition of teacher leadership.

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Brainstorm the key characteristics of teacher leaders.

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Day 1 – Handout 6
Day One Reflections

Write down your reflections from the material presented in day one. How can this information impact you and your school community?

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What is your most important insight or takeaway from day one?

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Day 2 – Handout 1
Teacher Leadership in Your School

Key Question #2

What if we developed teacher leaders within our school community?

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Refine your definition of teacher leadership and list three to five characteristics of teacher leaders in your school community.

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Day 2 – Handout 2
Leadership Competencies for Teacher Leaders

Key Question #3

How do we identify and develop teacher leaders?

Working in small groups, identify the leadership competencies for teacher leaders.

Teacher Leadership Competency	Definition or Explanation
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Day 2 – Handout 3
Leadership Competencies for Teacher Leaders Continued

After discussion, reflection, and individual evaluations, work as a group to refine the teacher leadership competencies and including competency identifiers.

Teacher Leadership Competency	Definition or Explanation	Identifiers
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Day 2 – Handout 4
Day Two Reflections

Write down your reflections from the material presented in day two. How can this information impact you and your school community?

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What is your most important insight or takeaway from day two?

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Day 3 – Handout 1
Leadership Competencies – Identifying Teacher Leaders

Think of the teachers in your school who currently hold leadership positions or demonstrate the potential to become teacher leaders. Complete an evaluation of each teacher by ranking their current performance according to the previously identified competencies of teacher leaders.

Use the following raking scale.
1 = poor
2 = fair
3 = good
4 = excellent

Teacher Name	Competency One	Competency Two	Competency Three	Competency Four	Competency Five
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

Day 3 – Handout 2
Developing Teacher Leaders

Using the evaluation of teachers within your school, identify areas of strength and areas for leadership development.

Record the areas of strength among the previously evaluated teachers.

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Record the areas for leadership development among the previously evaluated teachers.

_____
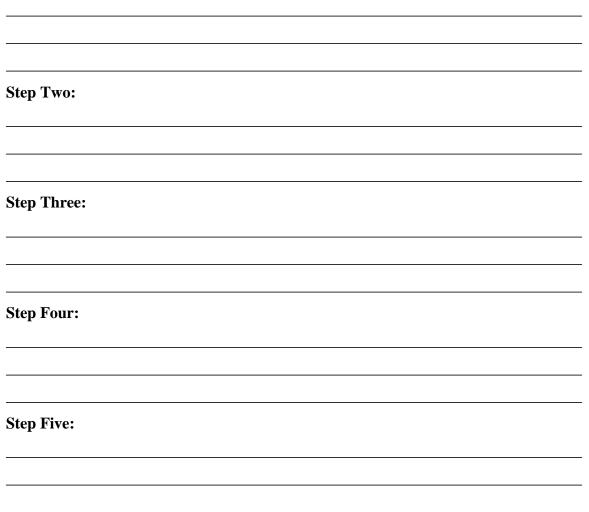
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Day 3 – Handout 3
Developing Teacher Leaders

Key Question #4

What needs to take place for us to implement a program of teach leadership?

Working in small groups, identify specific steps that need to be taken to implement a program of teacher leadership based upon the principals of distributed leadership within your school community.

Step One:

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Step Two:

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Step Three:

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Step Four:

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Step Five:

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Day 3 – Handout 4
The PLC in Your School – Revisited

Review the PLC evaluation you completed for your school on day one and copy the results from your initial evaluation in the chart below.

Characteristic	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
1. A collective vision and commitment to ensure the learning of all students.				
2. A collaborative faculty culture focused on improving classroom practices to ensure the learning of all students.				
3. Shared curiosity to understand the current school reality and discover best practices to improve instruction and student learning.				
4. A culture where faculty members value learning and seek to effect change by implementing the discoveries made through collective inquiry and collaboration.				
5. A commitment from all faculty members to revoke complacency and continually seek methods that allow for continuous improvements in the learning community.				
6. A results-oriented approach where learning goals are consistently evaluated to identify areas for student improvement and determine the best practices for classroom instruction.				

After reflecting on the materials presented over the previous three days, how can the practice of distributed leadership and the development of teacher leaders impact your school's PLC?

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Day 3 – Handout 5
Day Three Reflections

Write down your reflections from the material presented in day three. How can this information impact you and your school community?

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What is your most important insight or takeaway from day three?

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Day 3 – Handout 6
Workshop Evaluation

Please take a few moments to provide feedback related to you experience in during the professional development workshop.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
How would you rate the quality of information provided during the workshop?				
How would you rate the quality of the instruction and course materials?				
How would you rate the quality of the workshop location and facilities?				

How would your rate the amount of time provided for reflection and collaboration? (circle one)

                Insufficient   About Right   Excessive

Was the time devoted to reflection and collaboration beneficial? Please elaborate below.

_____

_____

_____

Please use the space below for any additional comments related to the workshop content or materials.

_____

_____

_____

Please use the space below for any additional comments related to the workshop presenter.

_____

_____

_____

_____

What was the most important concept or take-away that you learned during the previous three days?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B: Interview Procedure

Participant Code Number:_____   Interviewer: _____

Date of Interview: _____   Time of Interview: _____

Interview Procedures:

The interview will consist of a face-to-face meeting with each research participant (teacher or school administrator) for a period of approximately 30-45 minutes. The researcher is not an administrator in the district where the interviews will be conducted.

Prior to any interview, each potential research participant will be presented with the Consent Form. The researcher will obtain signed copies from each participant.

After collecting the signed Consent Forms, a number will be assigned to each research participant to safeguard the identity of each participant.

The researcher will communicate with each participant to schedule a date and time for the interviews.

The interviews will consist of eight open-ended questions. Additional follow-up questions may be part of each interview, as the researcher seeks to gain accurate information and obtain a full understanding of the perspective of each participant.

The participant has read this document and understand the interview process that will occur with the researcher as part of the study.

Participant Code Number: _____

Researcher Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Participant Code Number:_____   Interviewer: _____

Date of Interview: _____   Time of Interview: _____

Length of Interview: _____   Location: _____

Guiding Research Question:
How does the practice of distributed leadership contribute to the development and continued functionality of a PLC?

Interview Questions:
Key: A = questions asked to school administrators; T = questions asked to teachers; A/T = questions asked to both administrators and teachers.

1. Please share with me your knowledge and experience working in a professional learning community. (A/T)

2. Explain to me the model or system your school uses for a professional learning community? (A/T)

3. Share with me the goals and purpose of your school's professional learning community? (A/T)

4. Describe any professional development or training you may have received in relation to your participation in the PLC. (A/T)

5. As an administrator, what is your role in your school's PLC? (A)

6. As a teacher, what is your role in your school's PLC? (T)

7. Tell me about your knowledge and experience with the practices of distributed leadership. (A/T)

8. As an administrator, have you used the practice of distributed leadership to empower teachers to assume leadership roles within the PLC? If yes: (A)

How did you determine which teachers to empower?
Did the teachers receive any specific training before or after assuming a leadership position? Share with me your experience, as an administrator, in utilizing distributed leadership in the development and continued operation of a PLC.

9. As a teacher, have you been empowered to assume a leadership roles within your school's PLC? If yes: (T)

What is your role?
Who empowered you to assume a leadership position?
Did you receive any specific training before or after assuming a leadership role?
Share with me your experience, as a teacher-leader, within the framework of the PLC.

10. Has the existence of the PLC improved faculty collaboration within your school?
    If yes: (A/T)

How has collaboration been improved?
Who is involved with the collaborative efforts?
Share with me your experience in collaborating with members of the school faculty.

Appendix D: Observation Procedure

Participant Code Number:_____   Observer: _____

Date of Observation: _____   Time of Observation: _____

Observation Procedures:

The observation will consist of the researcher observation a professional learning committee (PLC) meeting with a group of the research participants (teachers and/or school administrators) for a period of approximately 30-60 minutes. The researcher is not an administrator in the district where the observations will be conducted.

Prior to any observation, each potential research participant will be presented with the Consent Form. The researcher will obtain signed copies from each participant.

After collecting the signed Consent Forms, a number will be assigned to each research participant to safeguard the identity of each participant.

The researcher will communicate with the participants regarding the scheduled date and time for the PLC meeting that will be observed.

The researcher will not participate in the PLC meeting and only act as a passive observer as the researcher seeks to gain accurate information and obtain a full understanding of the experiences of each participant.

The participant has read this document and understand the observation process that will occur with the researcher as part of the study.

Participant Code Number: _____

Researcher Name: _____

Date: _____