The Relationship of Instructional Supervision and Professional Learning Communities as

Catalysts for Authentic Professional Growth: A Study of One School Division

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I required to complete my post-graduate work and I will forever be thankful. I wish to dedicate this thesis to my wife, Dawn, and our three boys, Riley, Gavin, and Aidan. I hope I have been an example to them in demonstrating that no one is ever finished learning.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my grandmother, Nettie Farough, whom I lost during my post-graduate work. She had always wanted to be a teacher herself and was proud when I chose it as my profession. I also want to dedicate this thesis and my degree to her.

ABSTRACT

There has been a shift in education as the focus has moved from the centrality of teaching to the importance of learning (Aseltine, Judith, & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2006). The enhancement of educational experiences and learning of students is a goal shared by instructional supervision (Nolan & Hoover, 2004) and professional learning communities (DuFour & DuFour, 2003). As the need for professional development activities, such as instructional supervision and professional learning communities, to support professional growth continues, how these activities are implemented within a school division remains a critical concern.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the links between professional learning communities and instructional supervisory practice as catalysts for authentic professional growth. The result of this study suggests that a zone of authentic professional growth occurs when the activities of professional learning communities and instructional supervision as activities of professional development and reflective practice are aligned. In an era of greater accountability in education school divisions have attempted to support their professional staff with limited resources. Connecting activities to support the goals of the school division, such as professional growth and student learning, is one means of maximizing the use of the resources. There has been considerable research into instructional supervision and professional learning communities however little has been done regarding the connection and implications of these professional activities on each other.

The research questions of the study focused on gathering the level of agreement of teachers and in-school administrators regarding qualities of effective instructional supervision

and successful professional learning communities. An additional research question focused on what were the criteria of successful professional learning communities that related to effective instructional supervisory practice.

The study used mixed research methodology to collect information about one school division. A survey was utilized to collect the perceptions of teachers and in-school administrators regarding successful professional learning communities and effective instructional supervision. The data collected from the survey was analyzed by two interpretation panels, one consisting of teachers and the other consisting of in-school administrators. From the analysis provided by the panels and the survey data collected, it was found that from the perceptions of teachers and in-school administrators in one school system, professional learning communities can contain specific qualities that support effective instructional supervision. The combination of these two professional activities can become a catalyst for authentic professional growth for teachers and in-school administrators.

The findings of the study highlights the eight preconditions necessary for an environment or zone of authentic professional growth through the use of professional learning communities to support instructional supervision. Implications, based on key findings, of the study include the need to manage time effectively, and to provide sufficient resources to support instructional supervision through professional learning communities. The school system also needs to develop a culture in which there exists a common understanding of instructional supervision and professional learning communities. It was found that ownership and shared leadership are vital to creating an environment which can embrace the collaborative culture necessary for successful professional learning communities and effective instructional supervision.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The primary focus of school divisions is the enhancement of student learning. The formation of the professional learning communities model as a staff development activity encourages the professional growth and development among its staff to focus on learning (DuFour & DuFour, 2003). Similarly, instructional supervision is a way to support professional growth and competency and has been identified as an integral component of staff development, not a separate activity (Nolan & Hoover, 2004).

The instructional supervision of teachers continues to play an important role in Saskatchewan. As the call for accountability in education builds, there is pressure to ensure that educators are meeting expectations by the government, boards of education, and the public. According to Merideth (2007), the accountability movement that has placed increased emphasis on what students should know and do has also placed pressure on the continued professional growth and development of teachers. In the Saskatchewan context, initiatives such as the Assessment for Learning Program (Ministry of Education, 2007) and the Provincial Learning Assessment Program (Ministry of Education, 2007) deal with enhancing student learning through professional support.

According to Auger and Wideman (2000), the enhancement of educational experiences and learning of students is a goal of professional development activities. This goal is also shared by instructional supervision (Nolan & Hoover, 2004) and professional learning communities (DuFour & DuFour, 2003). Professional development, instructional supervision and professional

learning communities support the professional growth of teachers. Use of these practices within a school can support school improvement, teacher quality and student learning. Two integral components of professional growth is the reflection of one's own practice, and the opportunity to work in teams. The inclusion of these activities within a school can ensure that collaboration and reflection will occur (Danielson & McGeal, 2000).

Within the professional learning communities model, described by DuFour (2003), periodic reviews are important to the structure. Planning, monitoring, modeling, questioning, time allocation, celebrating, and confronting-all ensure the efficiency of the model and are characteristics of professional learning communities. Through the process of professional learning communities, staff development at the school level occurs. Superior staff development procedures result in teachers talking and thinking about effective teaching (DuFour & DuFour, 2003).

Policy development based on research at the school division level is necessary for success by schools and teachers. As DuFour (2003) stated, "Practices of the central office play a major role in the eventual success or failure of the improvement efforts of individual schools" (p. 16). Research has shown that school divisions are able to develop written policy but are much less successful in putting written policy into effective practice (Townsend, 1987).

School division administrative staffs are accountable to boards of education to ensure policies in theory support policies in practice. Since school divisions devote a large percentage of their budget to the expenditures of personnel, there is a natural link between the development of human resources and the efforts to improve student learning (DuFour & DuFour, 2003). Townsend, (1987) commented that "The implementation of new teacher supervision and

evaluation policies is a task far more complex and more difficult than most school systems are prepared for" (p. 24). The ability to connect professional learning communities and instructional supervision within a school division offers an opportunity to manage the limited resources available.

Collaboration among educators to foster teacher improvement is imperative as teachers cannot thrive isolated from colleagues and be denied access to fresh ideas and insights (Burnette, 2002). Glickman (2002) stated that the traditional method in instructional supervision of random drop-in visits by a supervisor a few times a year without the consideration of continuous discussion, critiquing, and planning with others actually, leads to the diminishment of the teaching profession.

To ensure a positive result of staff development, the school climate must contain trust, mutual respect and a willingness to work collaboratively (Nolan & Hoover, 2004). In conjunction with staff collaboration, principals who serve as staff developers will utilize supervision models that enable them to provide one-on-one staff development (DuFour & DuFour, 2003). Instructional supervision models which contain elements and characteristics of professional learning communities can help support teacher growth and student learning. Aseltine, Faryniarz and Rigazio-DiGilio (2006) stated that new approaches to instructional supervision focus on the professionalism of teaching by supporting teachers to play a critical role in determining the focus of their professional efforts and places student learning at the centre of the focus. The collective reflection and learning by a group of teachers and the establishment of a professional learning community holds the greatest potential for effecting student learning and the lifelong learning capacities of teachers (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie, 2001).

There has been considerable research into instructional supervision and more recently in professional learning communities. There are characteristics that are common to both activities however there has been little done connecting them. Therefore, a need arises to examine the role of professional learning communities in enhancing instructional supervision for the purpose of supporting the professional growth of teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the links between professional learning communities and instructional supervisory practice as catalysts for authentic professional growth. The guiding question was, How can the professional growth of teachers be enhanced through professional learning communities and instructional supervision? Answering the question was based upon the perceptions of professional staff in one school system where instructional supervision and professional learning communities were practiced in various degrees. The specific research questions for the study included:

1. What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?

2. What is the level of agreement, by in-school administrators, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?

3. What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of successful professional learning communities, based on literature, are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?

4. What is the level of agreement by, in-school administrators, that the qualities of successful professional learning communities, based on literature, are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?

5. What are the criteria of successful professional learning communities based on the literature that are seen to relate to effective supervisory practice?

The study used two methods to collect data, a survey and an interpretation panel. The primary function of the survey was to help describe what professional staff perceived as qualities of successful professional learning communities, qualities of effective instructional supervision and which qualities of professional learning communities could be connected to supporting instructional supervision. The criteria that would inform recommendations for policy development to enhance instructional supervision through professional learning communities was provided in the study. The interpretation panel was utilized to interpret the data collected from the survey. The panel was made up of members of the school division which initially completed the survey. The use of the survey, a method of quantitative research, provided descriptive research to describe the phenomena being studied. The interpretation panel, a qualitative research method, provided an analysis by the individuals directly involved in the phenomena. The case study of one school division as the focus of the study utilized mixed methods research. The results of the case study should be of interest to policy makers and educators implementing such programs (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

Significance of Study

There has been a shift in education as the focus has moved from the centrality of teaching to the importance of learning (Aseltine et al., 2006). How professional support is delivered to

teachers has impacted the role of supervisors. Practices such as peer coaching, mentorship and professional growth plans facilitate the involvement of colleagues in the supervisory process. As trends of how professional support to support professional growth is delivered changes, supervisors and supervision practices must also change. There is a shift in focus from supervising teachers to developing the capacity of teachers to work collaboratively (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005) to support professional growth.

In many ways the inclusion of practices within instructional supervision that support professional growth has become another avenue of professional development. Reflective practices by teachers acknowledges that self-awareness is vital to the work of a professional. Through reflection, the experiences, behaviours and meanings of an individual are made and interpreted informing future decision making (Howard, 2003). The study attempts to contribute insights into the present understanding of instructional supervision, professional learning communities and reflective practice as a means of professional development that contribute to the professional growth of teachers. To date, no research or literature has been found combining elements of instructional supervision and professional learning communities to support professional growth.

The practice of professional learning communities has brought a focus on learning. In consideration of the benefits of professional learning communities, quality professional development requires an understanding that learning is an active process. Robb (2000) indicated that through active learning, learners reinvent, reorganize and construct knowledge.

Implications for policy development to enhance instructional supervision through professional learning communities have emerged from the study. These can have a significant

impact on current and future policy and practice. In this way, the study can inform the work of boards of education, senior administration within the school division and the ways professional growth is valued within the system.

In terms of practice, the study is significant as it enhances the work of teachers and the relevance of instructional supervision and professional learning communities to professional growth. The study supports the demand for collaborative time for teachers to engage in activities that support both processes. As Birman, Desimone, Porter and Garet (2000) shared:

> Teachers whose professional development includes opportunities for active learning report increased knowledge and skills and changed classroom practice. By investigating the links between professional learning communities and instructional supervisory practice as teacher development activities, professional development and focused professional reflection can be incorporated into supporting professional growth. (p. 30)

Assumptions of the Study

The following represented the assumptions of the study:

1. The school division has a policy and practice for instructional supervision and is operating professional learning communities.

2. Professional development and reflection are integral parts of professional learning communities and instructional supervision.

3. Instructional supervision is a form of professional development.

4. Professional development and reflection are components of professional growth.

5. Participants in the study will have knowledge of professional learning communities and instructional supervision.

6. Participants may not share a common understanding of professional learning communities and instructional supervision.

7. Participants will have answered the survey and participated in the interpretation panel honestly.

Delimitations of the Study

The following represent the delimitations of the study:

1. The population for this study consisted of teachers, vice-principals and principals in one school division.

2. The study was delimited to the perceptions of teachers, vice-principals and principals regarding professional learning communities and instructional supervisory practice.

3. The study was delimited to one school division within Saskatchewan.

4. The study was delimited in a context of a rural school system.

5. The study was delimited to data collected during February and March 2009.

6. The study was delimited to the analysis provided by the interpretation panels held in May 2009.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by the fact that the survey only was accurate to the extent that the respondents answered honestly. The interpretations offered by the interpretation panel were also only dependent upon the honesty of the participants.

Definitions

The following operational definitions were applied for the purposes of this study.

Professional Learning Communities: Professional learning communities refer to the combination of: (a) collaboratively developed and shared mission, vision, values and goals of the school and division, (b) collaborative teams that work interdependently to achieve common goals, and (c) teams using data to drive the role of instructional and school improvement to see targeted results (Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2002).

Instructional supervision: Instructional supervision is a planned, developmental process that is intended to support the career-long success and continuing professional growth of a teacher (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2002).

Teacher: A teacher is anyone in the schools who responded to the survey holding a valid teacher's certificate as defined by the Saskatchewan Education Act (1995).

Professional Development: Professional development is those processes and activities utilized to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they influence the learning of students (Guskey, 2000).

The Researcher

I am a teacher in Prairie Spirit School Division. I serve two main roles in my employment within the division. I am both a classroom teacher, as well as a seconded teacher by the local teacher association. I teach grade one in a kindergarten through grade six school. I have taught in this school for ten years, all at the grade one level. I serve as President of the Prairie Spirit Teachers' Association. I am provided release time to work for the teachers' association.

I have taught middle years and high school in Northern Lights School Division. In my last year in the division, I participated in a pilot project that focused on project based education for students. Academic curricula were taught through projects that consisted of a student organized and operated bakery, furniture manufacturing business, and greenhouse. In all, I have experience as a teacher in Saskatchewan for twelve years.

I am involved in a professional learning community (PLC) within the school division. I originally participated in a PLC team that consisted of other grade one teachers from within division. Our focus was on grade one mathematics. During the course of the study, I moved to a professional learning community that consisted of teachers from kindergarten to grade two based in my school. Prior to restructuring of the school divisions in the province, I was a member of a division based PLC team that concentrated on grade one math for a period of three years. The team had experience with the DuFour model of professional learning communities and had begun to implement practices which supported students who were not achieving success with the identified outcomes. I had also participated, at the same time, in a school based professional learning community. Within this team we focused on two subject areas and met with the grades directly below and above the grade level I taught.

I have participated in instructional supervision by being supervised in my two years in Northern Lights School Division and my first three years in my current school. I was supervised by my school principal and an assistant director from the school division office. After my first three years in the school division, I was supervised by in-school administrators and participated in peer coaching. My work in my graduate program has also allowed me to supervise colleagues

as part of my course work. I have participated in the formal cognitive coaching training available through the current school division.

Within the school division, I serve on the Professional Development and Professional Learning Communities planning committee. This committee develops professional development opportunities for teachers and monitors and supports the professional learning communities within the division. I also have served on the Professional Growth, Supervision and Evaluation committees that developed and recommended the new policy in supporting professional growth, supervision, and evaluation. The committee developed a detailed process to support teachers at all career stages. A similar committee has been working on a process to support in-school administrators. I serve on most committees, established in the school division, that relate to teachers due to my role as President. As a member of these committees, I have had the opportunities to participate in a variety of workshops, conferences, and professional development opportunities related to these areas.

My work within the local teachers' association has also provided me opportunities to attend workshops and meetings related to accountability, policy formation, and professional development within the provincial teachers' federation. The provincial organization has developed policy statements regarding professional growth and supervision to guide the education community in its practice. I have been directly involved with the provincial organization for ten years.

Overview of the Study

Chapter 1 contained a background to this study and an overview of its purpose, significance, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, definitions and background of the researcher. In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the related literature and establish the conceptual framework for the study. I describe the methods used in this study in Chapter 3 followed by presentation of the data derived from the survey in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, an analysis of the survey data by the interpretation panels, a summary of key findings and implications for policy, practice, research and theory related to the topic of study are provided.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I present a review of literature related to the topics of professional learning communities and instructional supervision. The purpose of the study was to investigate the links between professional learning communities and instructional supervisory practice as professional development activities that support professional growth. Two characteristics of professional learning communities and instructional supervision, namely, professional development and professional reflection, are described. The description of these two variables provides an additional perspective and connection to professional growth. Professional growth can be defined according to Peine (2007) as acquiring new knowledge or new skills and the continual application of the newly acquired knowledge and skills in the pursuit of improved student achievement. Peine identified the indicators of professional growth as when he or she:

1. Has acquired new knowledge and/or skills;

2. Uses the new knowledge and/or skills when and where appropriate;

3. Improves students achievement;

4. Enhances reflective practice, and

5. Contributes to the learning community.

Instructional supervision of professional staff is practiced in many school divisions throughout Saskatchewan. The development of professional learning communities has resulted in a shift towards collaboration and a developmental approach to professional growth. Instructional supervision, as a professional growth activity, can be connected to professional development and

reflection activities. The interdependence of these professional practices focuses in on enhancing teacher performance in the classroom and building the skills of the teacher as a professional to support student learning. Traditional instructional supervision practices need to be re-examined if teachers are to consider such experiences and processes as relevant to their professional role and growth.

<div align="center">**Professional Learning Communities**</div>

Literature focusing on professional learning communities has increased over the last ten years. In this section I will present key characteristics of successful professional learning communities and the connection to professional growth.

Concept of Professional Learning Communities

Previous models for school improvement have focused on the factory approach or clinical approach (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). In these approaches the leader's job was to identify the one best way and then mandate that everyone follow it. The factory approach was suited to a model of schooling that assumed there was one best way to do things. Professional learning communities are not compatible with this approach for school improvement. If school divisions are to be transformed into professional learning communities, the educators within them will be required to change many things, from policies and procedures and even themselves (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005).

The nature of professional learning communities provides a collegial, professional and results driven way of operating a school, one that is different from traditional experiences (Wells & Feun, 2007). Various definitions exist, but the common characteristics include teachers working collaboratively to reflect on their practice, examining evidence about the relationship

between practice and student outcomes, and making the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

In order to establish professional learning communities a new culture must be created. It is not just a program to be implemented (Fullan, 2006). The culture and structure, or design, of professional learning communities must be addressed in establishing a successful professional learning community. However, the ability to create cultural changes in a school or school division can be the most challenging (Wells & Feun, 2007). Changing the culture involves addressing elements such as collaboration, development of mission, vision, values and goals, focussing on learning, effective leadership, focused school improvement plans, celebration and persistence (Eaker, 2002). These elements are a necessary part of professional learning communities. Changing the culture of an organization is difficult and time-consuming. At the centre of the change is the development and working knowledge of a vision that is shared by all those involved (Huffman, 2003). Taylor (2002) stated that changing the mindset of isolation to a collaborative culture is a challenge even for strong leaders. Huffman (2003) suggested that the leader combines the personal visions of all staff members into a collective vision that is shaped and accepted by all.

The changes required, structurally and culturally to implement professional learning communities are complex. The conceptual framework (Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2002) can be grouped into three themes that are evident in policies, programs and practices. The themes are:

1. A solid foundation consisting of collaboratively developed and widely shared mission, vision, values and goals.
2. Collaborative teams that work interdependently to achieve common goals.

3. A focus on results evidenced by a commitment to continuous improvement.

Professional learning communities exist to answer three key questions. DuFour and DuFour (2003) have listed these questions as: (a) What is it we want all students to learn?, (b) How will we know when they have learned it?, (c) How will we respond when a student is not learning? The three questions focus the work of the professional learning community on student learning. If school divisions are to fulfill their mandate to educate students then efforts need to be placed into answering these important questions.

The model focuses on the assumption that formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn (DuFour, 2005). Every emphasis is placed on learning. Teachers as professionals take a leading role in developing and assessing standards at the school level. Through the collaborative teams, teachers use the collected data to develop strategies to ensure every student succeeds. Haberman (2004) identified the following attributes of a learning community: modeling, continual sharing of ideas, collaboration, egalitarianism, high productivity, community, and practical applications.

Results-driven education and school improvement are the focus of professional learning communities. Staff development activities must focus on the ability for teachers to help students achieve the intended results of the curriculum. Placing resources and effort into assisting teachers help their students results in successful professional growth. Lafleur and Parker (2004) stressed that it is critical to understand that improvements must take place within a school and that the school exists within a larger system. In order for teachers to have the opportunity to be involved in a professional learning community, it is critical that central office staff and school leaders play a major role in providing the necessary resources to support professional growth. The

responsibility of these leaders stems from their responsibility to ensure a high standard of both teacher and teaching quality (Kaplan & Owings, 2002). In addition, leaders need to consider communication, expectations and the politics, inside and outside of a school, when developing learning communities (Taylor, 2002). According to Servage (2006/2007), the focus on research-supported teaching practices is so compelling that one can wonder why the professional learning communities model is so difficult to implement. Her answer suggested that the problem was not with the basic rationale but with the inattention to the assumptions that underlie the collaborative process.

The benefits of professional learning communities as indicated by Gregory and Kuzmich (2007) are many. The reduction of isolation of teachers is supported by the collaborative team. There is an increased commitment to the school mission and vision. A collective responsibility for the total development of students and for student success is shared by teachers. There is also a higher likelihood that teachers will be well informed, professionally renewed, and inspired, which leads to significant advances in modifying teaching strategies. A higher morale, connected with more satisfaction and lower absenteeism, can lead to a commitment to making lasting and significant changes.

Strengths of Professional Learning Communities

Through effective professional learning communities, staffs experience both greater job satisfaction and the sense of accomplishment that comes with making a positive difference in the lives of students (DuFour & DuFour, 2003). Several authorities state teachers need feedback and comparative information to help them assess and enhance their effectiveness (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; McLaughin & Talbert, 2006). Professional learning communities provide the necessary

framework needed to promote collaborative learning through reflective practice. Blasé and Blasé (1998) suggested reflective practice increases awareness of one's professional performance resulting in improvement of performance. Effective instructional coaching often takes place within professional learning communities, which provides opportunity to providing examine data and student work (Kise, 2006).

The practice of teachers working as teams supports collective learning. An outcome of the learning may be the emergence of teacher leadership. The shared leadership promotes a variety of interactions and relationships that build capacity of change (Pankake & Moller, 2003). Huffman and Hipp (2003) stated that shared leadership provides shared responsibility, broad-based decision making and more accountability across the school community. The result is a developing capacity by teachers to help reculture schools as professional learning communities. Teachers need to be given the responsibility to determine how best to support the academic success of their students (Buffum & Hinman, 2006).

Professional learning communities provide opportunities for reflection and problem solving that allow teachers to build capacity based on what they know about students' learning and evidence of their progress (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Andrews and Lewis (2002) in their study found that shared understandings through professional learning can impact the actions of teachers in the classroom. The new image of the teacher, as a result of developing a professional community according to Andrews and Lewis, is strengthened by the concepts of collaboration, reflective dialogue, and an instructional leadership role.

Professional Learning Communities as Professional Growth

Professional learning communities not only have a positive impact on student learning, they also have an influence on the professional growth of teachers. When teachers collaborate within a professional learning community to resolve issues around what outcomes to teach and the best practice to teach it, they are in fact developing a common understanding of what effective teaching looks like (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). Teachers learn best by studying, analyzing, observing, doing and reflecting, collaborating with other teachers, by looking at students and their work, and by sharing their perspectives (Johnson & Altland, 2004). Schmoker (2004) stated that professional learning communities promote "competence" more than any other initiative seen in schools because teachers learn most effectively from one another.

The characteristics of professional learning communities include having collaborative teams, collective inquiry into best practice, a commitment to continuous improvement, and are results oriented. Professional learning communities are ongoing and are always adapting and changing to the needs of the learners. The professional learning communities' model is one of the most promising strategies for sustained and substantive school improvement (DuFour & DuFour, 2003). McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) indicated that there is a wide range of statistical data that support the claim that professional learning communities improve teaching and learning.

The nature of professional learning includes reflection on practice, collaboration, self-assessment and self-directed inquiry (Danielson & McGeal, 2000), which naturally lead to a community of learners. The traditional isolation of teachers does not promote improvement (Schmoker, 2004). Teachers who have carried out their roles within an isolated environment do

not tend to discuss concerns with colleagues that they may have about their own teaching

(Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). In order to support professional learning there must be a shift in focus

from the traditional evaluating and supervising of teachers to developing the capacity of teacher

teams, the entire school and even the school division to work collaboratively (DuFour, Eaker, &

DuFour, 2005).

By focusing on student learning, teachers in professional learning communities

strengthen their own practice. Teachers learn to better match assessments to outcomes and to use

assessment results to gauge their own effectiveness (Schmoker, 2004) in the classroom. Shared

practice supports the changing of what occurs in the classroom. The process of reviewing

colleagues' behaviours and classroom practices in a facilitative rather than evaluative context is a

critical aspect of professional learning communities (Cowan, 2003). Discussions regarding

teaching and learning are grounded in evidence and analysis rather than on opinion or

preconceptions (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

New teachers to the profession have a support network that is natural and purposeful

through professional learning communities. For a new teacher, a learning community provides

the social interaction and informal learning opportunities to learn about the standards, norms and

values of the profession (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Through the emphasis on collaboration

and learning, a new teacher can avoid a sense of isolation within the school environment.

Collaboration is a vital factor in professional learning communities (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003) and

this approach is a significant contributor to a new teacher's success within the profession. It is

important that new teachers to the profession or school division are supported in a collaborative

atmosphere as they are held to the same level of professional responsibilities as their more

experienced colleagues (Danielson & McGeal, 2000). The use of a professional learning

community provides an opportunity to help teachers to remain happy with their chosen career

(Slick, 2002).

McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) indicated that most researchers agree that teachers learn

best when they are involved in the activities that:

1. Focus on instruction and student learning specific to the settings in which they
   teach;

2. Are sustained and continuous, rather than episodic;

3. Provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and
   outside the school;

4. Reflect teachers' influence about what and how they learn;

5. Help teachers develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge
   they need to learn (p. 9).

The establishment of professional learning communities requires the availability of time

for teacher teams to collaborate. Little time provided for teacher learning and collaboration often

gets in the way of the professional learning communities model (Martin-Kniep, 2004). One of

the biggest challenges facing teams is ensuring their time is used to focus on and enhance student

achievement (DuFour, 2001). Teams require a framework for working during the allotted time.

Teams will be more successful when they have specific, practice related work to discuss

(Supovitz & Chirstman, 2005).

Professional learning communities can exist at the school and at the division level

(American School Board Journal, 2007). School divisions with small schools, and located in

rural areas, may find that supporting teacher and student learning require more system level activity because professional learning communities that stay within the school are similar to teachers who remain isolated in their classrooms. They inadvertently keep out the knowledge resources and collegial support necessary for learning and change (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Servage (2009) cautioned that professional learning communities can provide an appearance of professional autonomy, when in reality the learning is largely pre-determined. To maintain the professionalism of learning communities, Servage suggested that professional learning communities be open to a broader and richer range of possibilities for teacher learning and professional development that can be achieved by empowering the teachers involved.

Instructional Supervision

I will now present an overview of instructional supervision based on the literature.

Concept of Instructional Supervision

Nolan and Hoover (2004) defined teacher supervision as "…an organizational function concerned with promoting teacher growth, which in turn leads to improvement in teaching performance and greater student learning" (p. 26). The basic purpose of the supervision of teachers is to enhance the educational experiences and learning of all students (Nolan & Hoover, 2004). To achieve the goal of enhancing learning and promoting teacher growth, a supervisory activity must include policy directed collaboration with the assumption that teachers are intelligent, professional, and committed to the enhancement of their instructional performance (Renihan, 2004).

Teacher supervision systems that have been in place previously were based on the clinical model and have a top down approach. These systems have been complicated and

unhelpful for teachers who are trying to improve their professional practice (Danielson & McGeal, 2000). Traditional methods of instructional supervision focused on feedback from a supervisor that set as priority the qualities of the classroom environment more than on improving teaching and learning (Aseltine et al., 2006). In fact, Duffy (2000) stated there was no evidence when instructional supervision was used that it was effective for improving instruction. The research field of supervision has voiced a dissatisfaction with traditional models of supervision and a need for new approaches that enhance teacher professional growth (Silva & Dana, 2001).

According to Marshall (2005), there are five reasons why traditional clinical supervision systems are not effective. First the micro evaluations of individual lessons do not carry much weight. Secondly, Marshall pointed out that lessons which principals observed were not typical lessons conducted by the teacher. The observation of isolated lessons gave an incomplete picture of instruction. Fourth, teacher isolation was reinforced by supervision practices. Finally, most principals were too busy to do a good job on supervision.

Traditional clinical supervision has contributed to the growth in professional knowledge of teacher's instructional skills. However as Aseltine et al. (2006) indicated, these models were more of compliance rather than building instructional capacity. The need for an alternative model to the traditional approach is a result of several factors, including the following:

1. Shift in education from the focus of teaching to learning.

2. An increasing expectation of accountability.

3. Education literature and professional development initiatives are focusing on data-based decision making.

4. Traditional models focus on the process of teachers' work rather than its outcome.

5. Traditional emphasis on instructional processes delimits teachers' professional growth.

6. Traditional models may not link instruction and student learning or provide for differentiated instructional contexts.

7. Traditional methods of teacher evaluation rarely helped to make a link between professional growth and student learning needs.

Teacher perceptions of clinical or traditional methods of supervision have been one of resentfulness and caution (Gullatt, & Ballard, 1998; Townsend, 1987). When there is a perceived discrepancy between the stated purposes and emerging practices, teachers are less inclined to make a full commitment to the process (Townsend, 1987). In fact, teachers tend to believe that a traditional supervisor in their classroom indicates they are being evaluated, rather than being offered support (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). Supervision has often been a one-size-fits all approach. Diaz-Maggioli (2004) insisted that most supervisory practices include evaluation, whether implicitly or explicitly.

Qualities of Instructional Supervision

Four variables affect the classroom performance of teachers (Glatthorn, 1997). Organizational factors, instructional supports, student factors, and teacher factors all impact on the professional performance of a teacher. A strong supervision process should take into consideration the four variables. There is acknowledgment in the area of supervision that a contextual shift in supervisory policy is occurring. Education is moving from a system-level management and supervision of teachers to school-site management and empowerment of learners (Renihan, 2004). Rather than abolish supervision altogether, efforts need to be made at identifying the flaws of current supervision practices and address them (Alfonso, 1997).

According to Wanzare and da Costa (2000), the literature indicates four key strategies for enhancing the professional growth of teachers through instructional supervision. First, there is administrative support for ongoing staff development supported by modelling, coaching and collaborative problem solving. Second, teachers need to engage, individually and collaboratively, in the concrete tasks of teaching, observation, assessment, experimentation and reflection. Third, supervisors should match appropriate supervisory approaches to teachers' developmental needs with the ultimate goal of the teacher to be self-directed; and finally organizational leaders should work to establish a culture that values professional and collegial interactions among participants.

Instructional supervision processes must meet the unique needs of all teachers being supervised. From the beginning teacher to the well experienced teacher, instructional supervision must provide a variety of opportunities for each teacher (Nolan & Hoover, 2005). However, the standards and procedures expected of the first-year teachers is exactly the same as experienced teachers the moment the new teachers enter their classroom (Danielson & McGeal, 2000). Nolan and Hoover (2005) identified seven essential skills of classroom-based supervision. These skills include:

1. Builds trust and positive communication.

2. Uncovers espoused platforms and platforms in use.

3. Encourage continuous reflection and inquiry into teaching.

4. Collects systematic data.

5. Interpret and use the data.

6. Conference.

7. Foster a school wide climate that values community, collaboration and continuous growth.

Aseltine et al. (2006) developed a new model of instructional supervision and evaluation called Performance-Based Supervision and Evaluation. The model's strength is in the conversation between the teacher and supervisor as they collaborate to enhance the teacher's instructional capacity to improve student learning in essential skills, knowledge and dispositions. The model extends best practice in teacher supervision in the following ways:

1. Focus on instructional results.

2. Emphasis on setting meaningful and realistic professional goals measured in terms of improved student performance.

3. Encourages teachers to analyze, individually and collectively, student work and use this data to address learning needs.

4. Encourages teachers to design focused interventions to strengthen and enhance student learning in targeted areas.

5. Teachers develop a plan for professional growth that is related to improving student learning and establishes them as life long learners.

6. Teachers use student performance as evidence to demonstrate that learning has taken place.

7. Brings together through collaboration and commitment the work of the teacher, supervisor and additional resources.

8. Links the work of teachers with the goals of the school improvement plan (pp. 14-15).

In order to develop a strong process for supervision, the underlying reason should be considered. The underlying reason is built on teacher quality or effectiveness. Through our understanding of an effective teacher, the information which should be the primary focus of supervision is identified. Effective teachers, as Stronge (2002) stated, are dedicated to students and to the job of teaching while working collaboratively with other staff members. These teachers continuously practice self evaluation and self-critique as learning tools.

In developing a new supervision system, McGreal (1983) suggested that a school division start with the contact between supervisor and the teacher. Systems that work best impose the least amount of obstacles upon that relationship. According to Perry Rettig (1999), teachers should be given the opportunity to provide feedback through supervision to each other. Empowering teachers in peer supervision provides personal accountability and meaningful feedback through dialogue and analysis of the observations. The teachers converse more about their instruction and what they would like to try (Rooney, 2005). Good principals, according to Glanz (2005), continually engage teachers in instructional dialogue and reflective practices so they are equipped to improve the academic performance of their students.

Instructional Supervision as Professional Growth

The primary questions for increasing student learning identified in professional learning communities can be reworded into teacher supervision questions. With respect to the teaching profession, we can ask three guiding questions: What is it that we want teachers to do?, How will we know when they have done it?, and How will we respond when a teacher has not done what is expected?

Supervision only works when it leads to results that actually improve the teacher's effectiveness (Garubo & Rothstein, 1998). As Glickman (1998) noted, "The long-term goal of developmental supervision is teacher development toward a point in which teachers, facilitated by supervisors, can assume full responsibility for instructional improvement" (p. 199). Supervision and evaluation are separate but complimentary processes that provide the cornerstones of a comprehensive system of professional growth and accountability (Nolan & Hoover, 2005).

Danielson and McGreal (2000) suggested that a supervision policy that builds in collaboration is more likely to yield genuine effort than one that does not. Teacher supervision should include activities that provide opportunity for professional inquiry and collaboration. Teachers must be involved in processes emphasizing dialogue and collegiality (Gullatt & Ballard, 1998). Supervision policies have a greater likelihood of being supported by teachers when they are based on the teacher's desire to be more successful in the classroom (Garubo & Rothstein, 1998).

According to Renihan (2004) professionals re**act** more readily to collegiality than to "hierarchical" criticism. Teachers need supervisors who listen and respond to their needs and concerns (Garubo & Rothstein, 1998). Zepeda and Ponticell (1998) found that when teachers were made more aware of their own teaching practices, teachers could determine a need for change. The role of the instructional supervisor is to serve as facilitator rather than to act as the expert of instruction (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). A supervisor should be a guide, facilitator or collaborator (Glanz & Sullivan, 2000) engaging a teacher in reflective practice. The change in

role of the supervisor from judge to colleague is what is necessary according to Starratt (1997) to improve the relevance of supervision.

The personal and professional growth of teachers has a direct impact on student learning, teacher self-confidence, and classroom behaviour (Dollansky, 1998). Glatthorn (1997) suggested teachers need to have more control over their professional development. There is evidence that high standards of performance are easily promoted through shared professional norms rather than by bureaucratic controls. Fear, lack of trust, and bureaucratic practices were some of the barriers to real teacher improvement (Edwards, 1995). Mayer and Austin (1994) found the following:

> When teachers are given time, space, and security for personal, professional discussion and "soul-baring", authentic professional growth can occur. Associated with this growth, it appears, is an intensified sense of personal and professional efficacy and empowerment, as well as a heightened commitment to meet the demands and expectations of the professional responsibilities in teaching and learning. (p. 34)

Nolan and Hoover (2005) stated teacher supervision can consist of a variety of activities to support professional growth. Processes such as peer coaching, self-directed teacher development, action research and collegial development groups all assist the teacher in taking a more prominent role in supervision. By allowing a more personalized approach, supervision can help teachers to grow in a meaningful way that is respectful of their career stage, learning style and life circumstances. Action research, a cutting-edge practice, is used to encourage teachers to reflect, refine, and improve teaching and therefore is an integral component of any instructional supervision program (Glanz, 2005).

The instructional supervision of teachers should be an important component of an effective and comprehensive professional development program (Wanzare & da Costa, 2000). Wanzare and da Costa, after reviewing the literature, found the following connections between instructional supervision and professional development: both use data; staff development is necessary for effective supervision; both have a focus on helping teachers become more effective; both are a judgement-free process in a non-threatening atmosphere; both may be provided by teachers, supervisors and administrators; and finally both promote a sense of ownership, commitment, and trust toward instructional improvement.

Professional Growth Through Professional Development

Professional learning communities and instructional supervision support professional growth. Both activities have connections to professional development activities. In this section, I will present literature about general professional development activities.

Professional development can be defined as a career-long process in which educators fine-tune their teaching to meet student needs (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). Professional development support and promote professional growth. Professional growth enhances student learning. Therefore student learning is a goal of both professional development and instructional supervision (Regan, Anctil, Dubea, Hofmann, & Vaillancourt, 1992). Sullivan (1997) indicated that professional development is similar to supervision to the extent that both aim to promote teacher development and student achievement. The importance of professional development is supported by the fact that educational programs are impacted by the quality of teachers (Shulman, 2006). Studies have shown that teacher quality has a major influence on long-term student achievement (Killon & Hirsh, 2001).

Enhancing the quality of teaching is supported by professional development (Kaplan & Owings, 2002). Learning is more effective when the teacher is an active participant in the learning process (Glanz & Sullivan, 2000). Learning that is based on classroom practice is fundamental to the professional development of teachers and the building of professional learning communities (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003).

Professional development that allows teachers to make their own decisions provides independent focus and allows the teacher to assume personal accountability (Retting, 1999). The teachers' independence in making decisions results in an opportunity of self evaluation. Self evaluation by teachers is necessary for continued professional development (Goldsberry, 1997). Husby (2005) indicated that teachers have stated that when they can direct their own professional growth, learning is meaningful and results in increased knowledge and skill improvement. Teachers can and should take responsibility for their own professional development (Kaagan, 2004).

Many lists have been created identifying the criteria of effective professional development. However Guskey (2003) found a lack of agreement between lists of criteria. As a result, the design and implementation of professional development programs are varied. The following seven characteristics of effective professional development were gleamed from his analysis:

1. Enhancement of teachers' content and knowledge.
2. Provision of sufficient time and other resources.
3. Promotion of collegiality and collaborative exchange.
4. Procedures for evaluation.

5. Alignment with other reform initiatives and to model high quality instruction.

6. Should be school or site based.

7. Builds leadership capacity.

Lindstrom and Speck (2004) indicated that professional development is a lifelong, collaborative learning process that supports the growth of individuals, teams, and schools through a daily, job-embedded, and learner-centred approach. Lindstrom and Speck were able to identify key components of high quality professional development. They found that professional development deepened teachers' content knowledge and strengthening effective teacher practices while being centred on the teacher as an adult learner. Teachers required ongoing inquiry, practice and reflection through collegiality and collaboration. Professional development ideally developed shared leadership, resources and support allowing teachers to utilize research, held to standards and practiced accountability while they focused on student data to assist in the process. Ultimately, the teacher evaluates the process and accounts for student results. These characteristics play a fundamental role in ensuring that professional development empowers teachers to become lifelong learners. Bunting (2002) stated that the three keys to professional growth include collegiality, reflection and life experience. These keys empower teachers to direct their own professional growth.

Having teachers work together provides an opportunity for both new and experienced teachers to pose problems, identify inconsistencies between theories and practices, challenge common routines, draw on the work of others for generative frameworks, and attempt to make visible much of that which is taken for granted about teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). Gordon (2004) stated that professional support is a way of life. In developing

professional development, Gordon found that leaders need to consider the basic principles of adult learning. He identified the following principles of adult learning:

1. Adults are motivated to learn when the learning will meet a need or interest they are experiencing in their personal or work lives.

2. Adults bring considerable life experience and prior knowledge to the learning situation.

3. Adults learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process.

4. Adults have widely varying learning styles.

5. As adults develop personally and professionally, they have an increasing need to be self-directed, and

6. Adult learners have affiliation needs.

Professional development in rural schools can be additionally challenging. Additional emphasis needs to be placed on developing teacher leadership and empowerment in a rural setting. To support a collaborative process, areas such as communication, local support, distribution of power and control, opportunities to listen to complaints and respond creatively need to be considered (Hillkirk, Chang, Oettinger, Saban, & Villet, 1998).

Other writers have argued that professional development is not compatible with supervision (Griffin, 1997). However this comparison is based on a study using a clinical model of supervision and professional development that includes a collaborative framework. If professional development looks very different from supervision, then consideration must be made to discover what changes are required for both to work interdependently to support professional growth. Professional development that includes opportunities to observe and be

observed teaching, allow teachers to increase their knowledge and skills and change their own classroom practice (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet 2000). Teachers prefer approaches that allow collaboration and learning from others (Killion & Hirsh, 2001). Professional development should not be a process based on isolation where teachers must make meaning in isolation. Rather professional development should be supportive and interactive (Collay, Dunlap, Enloe, & Gagnon, 1998).

Collaboration in professional development provides teachers with an opportunity to adjust their perspective of the teaching profession. Routman (2002) pointed out that many teachers believe that everyone else is a successful practitioner who already knows how to teach a particular skill or discipline. The opportunity to connect with colleagues provides teachers with a reality check of their own self-evaluation. Working with colleagues creates a balance between competition and collaboration by supporting reflective thinking that transforms assumptions from self-centredness to objectivity (Terehoff, 2002). According to Helterbran (2008), planning in isolation tends to reproduce past planning, not to strengthen or improve it.

Additional professional development for new teachers can increase the likelihood of the individuals staying in the profession and to strengthen classroom management skills (Kaplan & Owings, 2002). New teachers need the opportunities for professional development to practice reflective practices with colleagues. A successful professional development plan provides opportunities for teachers to practice and reflect upon their own teaching (Reed, 2000).

Those implementing professional development need to also consider how school as organizations affect, and are affected by, teachers' learning (King, & Newmann, 2004). King and Newmann stated that student learning is affected by the quality of instruction. The quality of

instruction is affected by the school capacity and school capacity is affected by policies and programs. The environment is a considerable variable in supporting professional development. According to Killion and Hirsh (2001), when professional development becomes embedded in the daily routine, teachers become more effective at helping students learn and achieve.

Professional Growth Through Reflection

Professional growth has been identified as a goal of professional learning communities, instructional supervision and professional development. I will present perspectives based on the literature on reflective thinking as a necessary component for professional growth.

The concept of reflectivity in education is attributed to the work of John Dewey as he promoted reflective thinking in teachers to help clarify purposes, focus on methods, and improve the quality of teaching (Tauer & Tate, 1998). Reflective thinking is the process of making informed decisions and analyzing the consequences of those decisions (Taggart & Wilson, 1998). It is a meaningful and effective professional development strategy (Ostermann & Kottkamp, 2004). The process of reflection has the potential for profoundly changing the way we make sense of our experience of the world, other people and ourselves (Mezirow & Associates, 1990). Research over the last two decades suggests that reflection is the centre of effective educational practice in that it considers the cognitive, social, and moral implications of teaching (Pedro, 2006). The increase in the appearance of the term reflective practice in the literature suggests, according to Wesley and Buysse (2001), that reflectivity is becoming an accepted practice in education.

The increasing importance of reflection in the teaching and learning process can be attributed to changes occurring in education and society (Campoy, 2000). Nagel (2009)

highlighted four levels of reflection: (a) factual, focused on routines and procedures of classroom teaching, (b)procedural, centred on evaluation of teaching outcomes, (c) justificatory, focused on the rationales for teaching, and (d) critical, focused on critical examination of teaching as it impacts social justice. The last level of reflection is complex and difficult to learn. Critical reflection requires one to seek deeper levels of self-knowledge and to acknowledge how one's perspectives can shape the self conceptions of students (Howard, 2003).

Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) stated that reflective practice is different from traditional professional development in that reflective practice involves creating and applying knowledge in effective and appropriate ways. Traditional professional development focuses on the transfer of knowledge and that changes occur because of new information. Literature has celebrated the development of professional collaboration as a significant factor in enhancing student learning and teacher learning. As lifelong learners, teachers who monitor their learning through reflection and practice in fact enhance their effectiveness as educators. Sharp (2003) suggested that "…reflective practice and thinking should influence teachers' pedagogical methods. As teachers become more accountable in an attempt to understand why, what, and how they measure their quality of instruction, reflective thinking is an essential component" (p. 246).

Blasé and Blasé (1998) highlighted the characteristics of an environment that support professional growth. Efficacy, flexibility, social responsibility, and consciousness are essential. Social responsibility highlights the need for teachers to work in active participation and discussion with colleagues. This collaborative nature is necessary for long-lasting change in teachers' beliefs and practices. In fact, the opportunity for reflection not only maximizes learning but it improves teaching (Martin-Kniep, 2004). When reflecting with colleagues, teachers can be

confronted with contrasting beliefs. The confrontation stimulates engagement and further challenges teachers to assess and refined their thinking (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004).

Reflection is an important factor in successful professional development. Collay et al. (1998) stated that "Those who doubt "reflective practice" as the most important aspect of professional development are right. Practice without reflection on it is no practice at all." (p. 63). Reflection can be supported by considering Blasé and Blasé's (1998) suggestions. First reflection is often a shared learning experience. Time needs to be allotted for reflection to occur. A trusting relationship needs to exist between teachers and principals. Reflection is essentially making sense of what occurs and that the development of reflection skills requires support and modelling. Pedro (2006) stated that reflection is enhanced when teachers practice it within a supportive community. Learning communities provide regular opportunities for collaborative reflection and inquiry through dialogue (Wesley & Buysse, 2001).

Evans (1995) stated that reflecting involves personal risk, can produce doubt and requires the questioning of what we are doing. Working with others, reflection followed by conversation, can lead to improvements in group effectiveness (Garmston, 1997). However, Garmston suggested that some teachers are not comfortable personally reflecting with others. He pointed out that comfort does not mean safety, and that growth comes from operating outside one's comfort levels.

By accepting that reflection is a part of the role of the educator, teachers can begin to ask questions about what is worthwhile in teaching and why (Newman, 1998). York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere and Montie (2001) stated that education is about learning and learning is a function of

reflection. They indicate that the profile of a reflective educator consists of the following characteristics:

1. Committed to continuous improvement in practice.

2. Assumes responsibility for his or her own learning.

3. Demonstrates awareness of self, others and the surrounding context.

4. Develops the thinking skills for effective inquiry.

5. Takes action that aligns with new understandings.

Reflection is an important characteristic of good instructional supervision (Glanz & Sullivan, 2000). Teachers need the time and ability to reflect upon their work with students (Garubo & Rothstein, 1998). Having teachers reflect on teaching requires teachers to consider the daily work and making a conscious effort to see themselves as students would see them or as an observer in their classroom (McEntee et al., 2003). By adopting a reflective stance on the work of being a teacher, a teacher has the ability to ask questions about what is worthwhile in teaching and why (Newman, 1998). Teaching is not a static profession. Teachers have a responsibility, individually and collectively, to reflect on what is happening and why, as well as the effectiveness of their current teaching practices (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2002).

Teachers as reflectors must also be learners. Reflection builds on each learning experience and allows teachers to apply knowledge to their practice as well as their future deliberations (Correia & McHenry, 2002). Teacher learning takes place over time and requires opportunities to link previous knowledge with new understandings (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). The goal of professional learning is have the individual be able to question, search and seek opportunities to reflect on, and change, what they do (Falk, 2001). Helterbran (2008) stated

that great teachers typically have one important quality in common; they continuously work to strengthen and refine their practice and lives through reflection.

Conceptual Framework

As a result of this review of the literature, professional learning communities, instructional supervision, professional development and reflection are all linked to professional growth. Professional learning communities and instructional supervision are professional development activities that include the opportunity to reflect. If a school division supported these four elements of professional growth for their teachers the area in which they overlap creates an opportunity for authentic professional growth. The overlap of these four distinct concepts creates an ideal zone in which authentic professional growth is most likely to occur. In the study I connect the term 'authentic' to mean practices that actually occur, reflect the intended goals developed, and have meaning for the individuals involved. I have attempted to show the influence of these factors on professional growth in the form of a conceptual framework (see Figure 2.1).

The zone of authentic growth contains the indicators of professional growth that Peine (2007) stated to be evident by a teacher who has grown professionally. First, the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills can be provided through professional development activities such as professional learning communities and instructional supervision. Second, the zone supports teachers to use the new knowledge and/or skills when and where appropriate. The work by the teacher in professional learning communities and instructional supervision activities can be connected to improving student learning. The zone, in the use of reflective practices enhances

the reflective opportunities for the teachers involved. Finally, the collaborative work completed

in the zone contributes to the learning community as a whole.
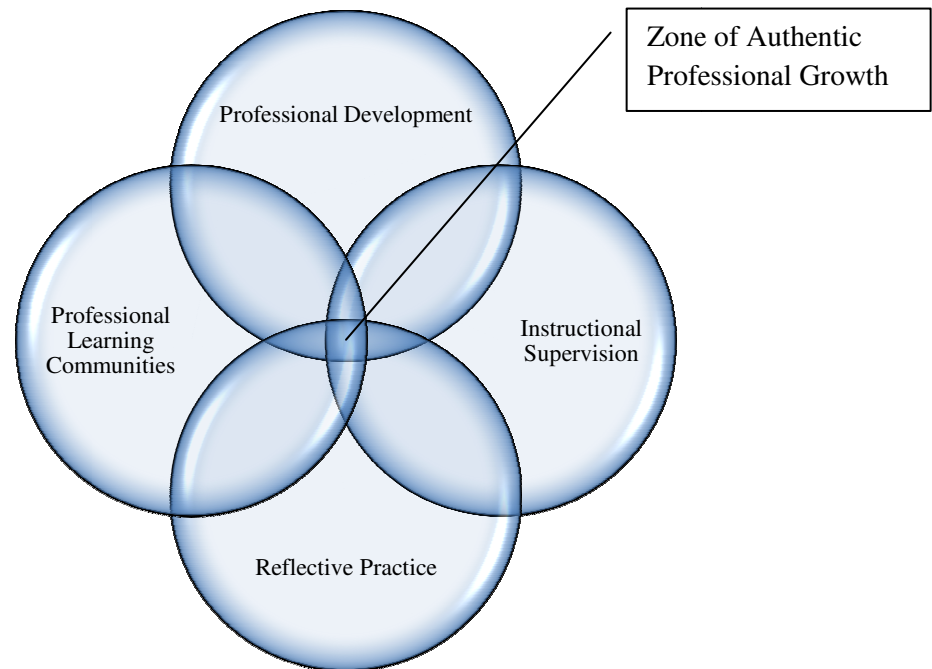
Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework: enhancing teacher supervision through
professional learning communities as catalysts for authentic professional growth

Based on the literature presented I am able to connect these indicators to the practices of

professional learning communities and instructional supervision as professional development

activities. In a school division, all four variables of professional growth described can exist.

Practices in public education have reached a point where initiatives for professional growth need

to be interconnected. With the limited resources, especially in time, the avoidance of duplicating

activities to achieve the same goal of professional growth is warranted. The zone of authentic

growth is a place where a division can support one activity that contains an element of all four

variables to increase the likelihood of professional growth occurring. If professional learning

communities and instructional supervision contain opportunities for professional development and reflection then by connecting these, teachers have an opportunity to collaborate in an environment that connects their professional practice with their professional growth. What must be identified are the common elements of professional learning communities and instructional supervision exist that support t professional development, reflection and ultimately authentic professional growth.

Conclusion

In chapter 2, I provided a review of the related literature and established the conceptual framework for the study. The following chapter, Chapter 3, presents the methods used in the study. In Chapter 4 the data derived from the survey is presented. Chapter 5 includes an analysis of the survey data by the interpretation panels, a summary of key findings and implications for policy, practice, research, and theory related to the topic of study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of the research methodology that was utilized in this study. A description of the research design including the setting, theoretical basis, data collection procedures, and data analysis strategies are presented.

Mixed Methods Research

The study was a mixed methods research design as it involved the integration of quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Mixed method studies are defined according to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) as "those that combine the qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research methodology of a single study or mulitphased study" (p. 17). By having the design of the study containing mixed methods, I was able to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering my research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

This study was sequential in nature in terms of the study being conducted in two phases. The sequential mixed methods design is popular with graduate students and novice researchers wanting to use both approaches in their work but not wanting to get into difficulty of using the two approaches simultaneously (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The first part of the study was a quantitative phase involving the use of a survey and the second phase was qualitative in nature as it utilized an interpretation panel, a type of focus group.

According to Creswell (2003) the mixing of different research methods likely orginated in 1959 when Campbell and Fiske used mulitple methods and encouraged others to examine

mulitiple approaches to data collection in study. Though debates about quatitative and qualitive research can be traced to occurances in sociology in the 1920's and 1930's (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). According to Tashakkori and Teddlie, the debate was over measurement methods. Investigators tended to remain faithful to qualitative or quantitative approaches. Over the last forty years there has been conflict and coexistance between the three methodlogical communities of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In fact David and Sutton (2004) have stated that all research is both qualitative and quantitative.

Mixed methods research is less well known than the qualitative or qualitative research methods as it has only emerged as a separate orientation in the past twenty years (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). David and Sutton (2004) acknowledged that the use of mixed mehthods is an attempt to gain benefit from different methods from across the spectrum of research philosophy and that it is an attempt to get the best of all the available options. Understanding that all methods have limitations, researchers have felt that biases inherent in any single method could cancel the biases of other methods (Creswell, 2003). Creswell insisted that in the social and human sciences, the data collection associated with both forms of data is expanding. A classic mixed methods combination (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) uses interviews in combination with questionnaires. One type of data gives "greater depth", while the other gives "greater breadth" (p. 35).

Elements of descriptive research in connection with case study research were contained in the study. The results collected from the survey were descriptive in nature in that the analysis of numeric data provided a summary of indicators that described a group and the relationships among the variables within the group (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Elements of a case study,

where there is an in-depth analysis (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) of a single case and data collection utilizes a variety of sources, were present in this particular study.

The realities of the respondents' professional experience were described in the study and therefore the study could be characterized as a descriptive study. Descriptive research has the possibility of yielding valuable knowledge about opinions, attitudes, and practices. The resulting knowledge can help shape educational policy and initiatives to improve existing conditions (Gall et al., 2003). Descriptive research is non-experimental and can be either qualitative or quantitative (Charles, 1995). According to Charles the data can include descriptions, opinions, scores, analyses, and other measurements. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) the information collected through descriptive methods helps the reader understand the nature of the variable and their relationhip.

The study focused on a particular phenomenon that provides an analysis of what one single school division is doing. Case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are posed, when there is little control over events by the researcher and the focus is on a phenomenon in a real-life context (Yin, 2003). In other words, the phenomenon is studied in its natural context, bounded by space and time (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). This type of research focuses on a phenomenon, which is the processes, events, or things of interest to the researcher. The case is of a particular instance of the phenomenon being studied (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003) and studies the experience of real cases operating in real situations (Stake, 2006). In this study a specific school division where there existed an instructional supervision policy and professional learning communities being actively practiced was the focus.

To affirm the common qualities of effective instructional supervision and a successful professional learning community, a sample was required from the teacher population. The first part of the study was quantitative through the collection of numerical data using a survey. Survey research is standardized and structured, as is illustrated in the use of a questionnaire. Information to be analyzed was obtained from an author-designed survey. None of the variables being studied were to be experimentally manipulated.

The second aspect of the study was qualitative in the form of an interpretation panel, a specialized focus group whose function was to interpret the results of data analysis after the data have been collected and subjected to the preliminary analysis (Noonan, 2002). The interpretation panel provided for me qualitative data for the study. According to Grady (1998) qualitative research helps fill in the gaps left by numerical data gathered in strictly quantitative research. In addition, qualitative research addresses participant perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection consisted of six phases. The first phase consisted of the selection of the site as a case that met the criteria of having an instructional supervision process and operating professional learning communities. Phase two consisted of developing the survey instrument to be used to collect data, leading to piloting the survey in phase three. The actual administration of the survey to the sample population represented phase four of the study while phase five was the initial analysis of the data collected from the survey. In phase six, these findings were presented to two interpretation panels, one consisting of teachers and the other consisting of in-school administrators. The panel considered the links between professional learning communities and instructional supervisory practice as catalysts for authentic professional growth.

Phase One: Locating the Setting of the Study

The selection criterion used in the study was that the school division must have had a policy and practice for instructional supervision and professional learning communities and that these were actively engaged with in the school division. Furthermore, the school division selected in the study had to be accessible to me.

The school division selected was a rural school division surrounding a large urban centre. The communities within the school division varied in size from small villages to growing communities consisting of urban qualities. There were approximately 9100 students served by the school division in forty four schools. The schools ranged in type from Hutterite colony schools, schools serving kindergarten to grade twelve, elementary schools, and high schools. The teacher and in-school administrator population of the school division was approximately six hundred fifty. The school division had utilized an instructional supervision process and operated professional learning communities. To ensure that an inferential leap from the sample to the entire school division teacher population existed, a random sample of teachers from the school division had to be obtained (Gall et al., 2003). All teachers and in-school administrators in the selected schools were sent the survey to maximize the rate of return. The selected schools were proportional to the number of each type that existed within the school division.

The selected school division that granted my request (Appendix A) to conduct the research study was also my employer. As a result greater care in conducting the study was necessary to remove potential bias. My role within the local teachers' association in the school division resulted in that most teachers and in-school administrators knew who I was. In most contacts with colleagues, most would have connected me to my role within the teachers'

association. In order to ensure that participants did not feel obligated to participate there was no direct interaction with possible participants from me and I never conveyed the expectation that everyone had to complete the survey. In contacting the participating schools, I reminded in-school administrators that there was no expectation that teachers must complete the survey. Teachers were invited to participate through the survey documentation and their in-school administrator only. The cover letter indicated permission by the school division to conduct research but did not indicate that there was a requirement for individuals to participate. Participants were not contacted by their employer to confirm their participation in the study. Participants may have not been as honest in their responses had there been a perception that the employer was requesting the data. The use of the interpretation panels to analyze the data was provided me with perspectives that may have been unique from my own.

Phase Two & Three: Instrumentation Used in the Study

The sample of teachers that contributed to the study completed a survey rating their perspectives on the qualities of successful professional learning communities, effective instructional supervision and the qualities of successful professional learning communities that were perceived as critical to supporting instructional supervision. The survey had to contain questions and possible responses which adequately represented the subject under investigation and posed questions in a clear manner in order to be to be considered valid (Smith, 1989). While the survey design was largely closed, the participants also had an opportunity to contribute additional criteria to the ones already listed.

The 21 guidelines established for designing a questionnaire listed in Gall et al. (2003) and Slavin's (1992) instructions for constructing questionnaires were used as a guide in the

development of the survey. The guidelines from Gall et al. are listed in Table 3.1. A well

designed questionnaire can provide information such as identifying needs, determining opinions,

attitudes, and beliefs, identifying interests, identifying feelings and perceptions and describing

behaviours (Thomas, 1999).

Table 3.1
Guidelines for Designing a Questionnaire*

1. Keep the questionnaire as short as possible
2. Do not use technical terms, jargon, or complex terms that respondents may not understand
3. Avoid using the words questionnaire or checklist on your form.
4. Make the questionnaire attractive by such techniques as using laser printing.
5. Organize the items so that they are easy to read and complete.
6. Number the questionnaire pages and items.
7. Put the name and address of the individual to whom the questionnaire should be returned both at the beginning and end of the questionnaire.
8. Include brief, clear instructions, printed in bold type and in upper and lower case.
9. Organize the questionnaire in a logical sequence.
10. When moving to a new topic, include a transitional sentence to help respondents switch their train of thought.
11. Begin with a few interesting and nonthreatening items.
12. Put threatening or difficult items near the end of the questionnaire.
13. Do not put important items at the end of the questionnaire.
14. Provide a rationale for the items.
15. Include examples of how to respond to items that might be confusing.
16. Avoid terms like several, most, and usually.
17. State each item as brief a form as possible.
18. Avoid negatively stated items because they are likely to be misread by respondents.
19. Avoid "double-barrelled" items that require the subject to respond to two separate ideas with a single answer.
20. When a general question and a related specific question are to be asked together, it is preferable to ask the general question first.
21. Avoid biased or leading questions.

*Note: Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2003). *Educational research: An introduction* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

The first part of the questionnaire was designed to gather information on respondents' demographics. The second part focused on the level of agreement respondents had regarding their perspective on the specified qualities of a successful professional learning community, while the third part focused on the level of agreement respondents had regarding their perspectives on the specified qualities of effective instructional supervisory processes. The final part of the survey had the respondents consider how critical each of the qualities of successful professional learning communities was to effective instructional supervision. The information collected from this last section provided data linking professional learning communities to instructional supervision. All the qualities presented in the survey were research based using the review of the literature conducted in chapter two.

The survey utilized a Likert type scale. Likert scales typically ask for the extent of agreement with an attitude item (Gall et al., 2003). The use of a Likert scale allowed me to obtain more information of the respondents' perspectives that is beyond simply asking for an agree/disagree response (David & Sutton, 2004). The usefulness of rating scales as defined by Thomas (1999) include gathering information about the degree to which a person finds something purposeful, measuring attitudes, opinions, perceptions, and beliefs and determining how frequently a person participates in certain activities. Attitudinal scales in questionnaires are commonly used in survey research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The survey in the study used a six point scale to avoid the use of a neutral option by the respondents. The items included in the survey were based on the literature of successful professional learning communities and instructional supervision. However not all participants in the study may have direct experience with these practices in a successful manner. Some participants, had they been given a neutral option, may have chosen to respond in a manner that indicated not complete agreement or

disagreement resulting in a possibility that as a researcher I may not have sufficient data to determine levels of agreement or how critical an item was. Participants were aware of the topic being studied removing the need for a category in which a participant could indicate unfamiliarity and the desire to provide an opportunity to capture any possible divergent views were two reasons I chose to ensure that there was an opportunity for a greater distribution of responses on the continuum of negative to positive perspectives. The survey also provided respondents with an opportunity to add any additional items to the ones provided. Providing respondents with an opportunity to complete open-response items within the questionnaire permitted them to express their feelings, ideas, or reactions without being limited to a preset format (Thomas, 1999).

Well developed questionnaires are piloted or pre-tested (Gall et al., 2003) to ensure clarity and purpose. Confirmed by David and Sutton (2004), the piloting allows the researcher to gather information on the appropriateness of the question, and how the overall survey format and structure actually function. The survey was piloted by fourteen individuals in December 2008 that were not associated with the school division selected for the study. The location of the pilot was at a great distance from me and as a result was coordinated by email and regular mail. The purpose of the pilot study was to gain any possible insight as to the design and appropriateness of the survey items. The administration of the survey was provided by an in-school administrator. The in-school administrator distributed and collected the surveys and sent the completed surveys directly to me. The in-school administrator emailed me, providing affirmation regarding the clarity and transparency of the survey and the process used. The data collected from the pilot were analyzed using the mean, standard deviation, and a reliability test (Alpha Test) to determine

if the survey collected the type of data I required to conclude the study. After analyzing the data from the pilot I decided that no changes to the survey were necessary.

The survey is useful when the researcher wishes to reach a large number of respondents. Little time and smaller financial resources are required to administer a questionnaire when compared to other methods such as interviews. Another strong feature of the questionnaire is that it allows respondents to remain anonymous when they answer the questions (Turney, & Robb, 1971; Gall et al., 2003). Respondents can also complete a survey at a time when it is convenient for them (David & Sutton, 2004).

There are limitations to the use of questionnaires that may affect the quality of the study. Turney and Robb (1971) identify two main limitations. Mailed questionnaires may produce a small number of returns. Respondents may not answer all the questions, and they may not answer the questions completely, correctly, or honestly. Questionnaires often require extensive follow up plans for sending reminders to increase the response rate (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The use of a self-completion survey typically has a low response rate. According to David & Sutton (2004) a rate of 50% or less can be the norm. Another disadvantage identified by David & Sutton is the inability of the researcher to control the context within which the respondents complete the questions.

Phase Four: Sample Selection & Administration of Instruments

The survey utilized a simple cluster sample within the school division. A cluster sample is characterized by the researcher samples groups that occur naturally within the population being studied (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), such as schools within the school division. The total break down of the types of schools within the school division included fifteen elementary

schools, eight high schools, thirteen K-12 schools, and eight Hutterite colonies. One third of each type of school was targeted to contribute to the sample, resulting in a goal of thirteen participating schools. Within the thirteen schools the number of each school type targeted were as follows: five elementary, two high schools, four K-12 and two Hutterite colony schools. These thirteen schools were selected by a stratified random sampling technique. Four lists were created, one for each type of school. Within that list each school received a number. I moved down the list by a number that was drawn. I invited that school in that list and then drew another random number. The process continued until I had achieved the number of schools I needed. One third of the schools were targeted rather than all the schools due to the restrictions of time provided for the study in terms of administering, collecting and analysis of the data. Financial constraints in providing a survey and related documents to all teachers and in-school administrators were also a factor.

All teachers and in-school administrators in the selected schools were invited to participate in the survey and in the interpretation panel. If a school chose not to participate another random selection process occurred until there were 13 schools in the sample. The in-school administrator was in most cases the contact person for the study. The contact person received the material to carry out the study, distributed the material to staff and then returned the material to me a specified time. The contact person was the only connection I had with the participating school. The approximately two hundred teachers and in-school administrators were invited to complete the survey through the survey cover letter (Appendix B). Participants were requested to complete the survey (Appendix D) without identifying their name through the cover letter provided with each survey. The surveys were sent out in February 2009.

One to two weeks after each school had received the surveys, a follow-up email was sent to the school contact to remind staff of the opportunity to participate. A final deadline was set for the end of March. Most schools sent in their completed surveys immediately after receiving them however a few schools required several follow-up emails or phone calls to complete the survey portion of the study.

Phase Five: Collation of Initial Findings

When the surveys were collected, each survey was numbered and the corresponding data were entered into the excel computer program for storage. Based on the number of responses, some information collected in the demographic category, such as years of experience and grade level taught were placed into a category representing a range. For example, the data for years of experiences were divided into three categories, 0-10 years of experience, 11-20 years of experience and 21+ years of experience. Further analysis of the data was made using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), computer software designed for research data collection and analysis available for research at the University of Saskatchewan. From this program, percentages, means, standard deviation, variance, frequency count and reliability tests were generated. Means scores were collected for each item on the survey. The analysis will be based on the level of agreement for each item in sections B, C, and D of the survey.

Any potential contrasts between participants or categories of participants were recorded. These contrasts were investigated between participants in the variables of year of experience, grade level taught (teachers), and the positions of respondents.

Phase Six: Interpretation Panels

Once data was collected from the survey, the study moved from a quantitative method to a qualitative method. Two interpretation panels were utilized to assist in the analysis of the survey data. The use of the interpretation panel provided me with an opportunity to link collaborative action research to the quantitative data collection of the survey.

Interpretation panels are a recent development in education research as little has been written regarding its use. The interpretation panel has the attributes of appreciative inquiry, which involves people in collecting and analyzing data to improve a system (Noonan, 2002). An interpretation panel is similar to the use of a focus group. Noonan stated that the difference between a focus group and an interpretation panel is that the panel is used after the data is collected and subjected to preliminary analysis. A focus group is a form of group interviews, which is a group interview process that involves providing questions to a group of individuals who have been assembled for this purpose (Gall et al., 2003). Focus groups have become more popular in the social sciences since the 1980's and can be used as a post-primary research tool to clarify the results generated by another research method (David & Sutton, 2004).

Noonan (2002) identified positive outcomes of interpretation panels. First, the panel can approach the interpretation of the data from a more grounded basis than the researcher. Secondly, the comments by the panel can indentify potential variable for further study. One of the problems of an interpretation panel can be when the panel offers an interpretation that is contrary to those of the researcher. In this particular study it was important for me as the researcher to reduce potential bias. A deliberate effort to allow participants of the interpretation panel to develop their own interpretation of the survey data using the guiding questions provided was important.

There are many benefits of a focus group to researcher. The focus group provides an opportunity for the researcher to ask for clarification if an answer is vague or not clear. Such information may lead to the conceptualization of the issues in ways totally different from what was anticipated (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). A focus group can provide an opportunity to shed light on quantitative data collected (Krueger & Casey, 2000) and offers the ethical advantage of giving participants greater control over the direction of the discussion (David & Sutton, 2004) compared to a standard interview. Focus groups can be helpful in identifying and understanding the criteria needed for successful rules, laws, or policies (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Kruger and Casey also suggest using focus groups when a researcher is trying to understand differences in perspectives between groups or categories of people or to uncover factors that influence opinions, behaviour or motivation.

Disadvantages associated with focus groups include potential abuses by the research in the selection of participants, directing discussion and interpreting responses in a biased fashion (David & Sutton, 2004). Other disadvantages identified by David and Sutton include that the researcher is unable to offer the same degree of confidentiality available in one-to-one interviews and that dominant individuals within a group may dominate the discussion. Another disadvantage can occur when the group is too small. Krueger and Casey (2000) cautioned that a small group may limit the total range of experiences. Qualitative research, as in the use of an interpretation panel, can cause problems with consistency as the researcher brings more of their own personal history, experience and perspectives to the analysis (Grady, 1998).

Facilitators of focus groups need to demonstrate skills in developing rapport, active listening, and questioning skills (Noonan, 2002). The questions in a focus group are phrased and

sequenced so that they are easy to understand and logical to the participant (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Being able to move from general to specific and to use the time allotted wisely are additional characteristics identified by Krueger and Casey as attributes of a good facilitator. In the study, I developed questions that were open-ended and general enough to be applied to all of the data being analyzed. For each of the data presented I asked the interpretation panel: Was there anything that surprised you? Why or why not? And, what resonated with you? These questions in my opinion were sufficient in opening the dialogue and guiding the discussion with the panellists.

An invitation was made to survey participants to participate in the interpretation panel through a consent form provided in each survey package sent out. From the individuals who completed the required consent form two panels were created, one consisting of in-school administrators and the second panel consisting of teachers. Participants of a focus group are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2000). In the case of this study, the participants were either all teachers or all in-school administrators. Focus groups vary in size but Krueger and Casey recommended five to ten people. Each panel in the study was targeted to contain five individuals randomly selected from the interpretation panel consent forms (Appendix C) completed at the time of the survey. Potential participants were placed in a list and were randomly selected by a number. The participants selected were invited by email to participate and given a choice dates to meet. The final date was established once five individuals had confirmed their participation.

The purpose of the interpretation panel was to analyze the collected survey data to assist in determining any frequencies, and themes from the responses. Panellists were not required to

have a background in research techniques or in statistical analysis. The only condition for

participation was that each panellist had to have participated in the survey phase of the study. At

the start of each panel meeting I presented the panellists with a definition of standard deviation,

mean, and the significance score provided by the ANOVA tests.

Statistical data collected from SPSS were presented in the format of the tables that are

presented in chapter four of the study. The panels were asked questions to clarify their

interpretations and to provide observations (Appendix G). For each of the survey sections data

was presented the interpretation panels and then the panel was asked: (a) Is there anything in

these items that surprised you? (b) Why or why not? (c) What resonated with you? After

reviewing the data collected the panel focused on four additional questions: (a) What were the

most important findings? (b)What were the implications on the operation of a school system?

(c)What were the silences? (d) And, what things were we saying about instructional supervision

and professional learning communities that had not been said in the data?

After the panel had met, I sent each panellist a copy of my summary of notes taken

during the discussion. I invited panellists with an opportunity to offer further clarification or

correction as necessary. No panellists contacted me in regards to the data collected.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity of the study, the results from the sample must be generalized to the

accessible population from which the sample is selected. Then the accessible population must be

generalized to the sample population. Gall et al. (2003) defined accessible population "Which is

all the individuals who realistically could be included in the sample" (p. 168). To achieve

construct validity, the specific phenomenon being studied must be related to the original purpose

of the study (Yin, 2003). Yin indicated that survey research relies on statistical generalization.

The inferential leap from the sample to the accessible population can be achieved if a random sample of the accessible population is obtained (Gall et al., 2003). All the teachers and in-school administrators within the selected school division used in this study had an equal opportunity to participate in the study. The inferential leap from the accessible population to the sample population is made by gathering the data collected to determine the degree of similarity between the two populations.

While considering the validity of the survey used in the study three areas were considered, face validity, content validity, and construct validity. Face validity according to (Gall et all., 2003) it is "the extent to which a casual, subjective inspection of a test's items indicates that they cover the content that the test is claimed to measure" (p. 625). In this particular study, the survey instrument was piloted to a group of individuals that had experience with professional learning communities and instructional supervision and were not connected to the school division that was selected for the study. Content validity in the study was addressed by selecting the qualities used in the survey from the literature that was reviewed. Finally, in addressing construct validity, the survey used a new instrument developed by myself using the literature reviewed. The actual use of the survey in the study tested the assumption that the survey accurately reflecting the construct that the survey was measuring.

In order for the survey to be reliable, the definition of reliability by Gall et al. (2003) is useful, "the extent to which other researchers would arrive at similar results if they studied the same case using exactly the same procedures as the first researcher" (p. 635). Using the SPSS software, the survey data was examined using Cronbach's Alpha. The results are presented in table 3.2.

In statistical analysis the Cronbach Alpha score varies between 0 and 1. The nearer the result is to 1, preferably at or over 0.8 the more internally reliable the scale is (Bryman & Cramer, 2005). The results of the Cronbach Alpha test indicate that the items in the survey were internally reliable. In addition to the Cronbach Alpha, a one-way analysis of variance, ANOVA was conducted (Appendix F).

3.2
Reliability Statistics: Cronbach Alpha

	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha*	N of items
Full Survey Results	.962	.963	52
Section B	.962	.930	17
Section C	.933	.933	18
Section D	.932	.932	17

Based on standardized items

Ethical Guidelines

The ethical considerations established by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board were followed throughout the study. Before proceeding with data collection and analysis, approval was sought using the standard application format (Appendix E). Approval was obtained from the board in February 2009. All provisions were made to offer anonymity and confidentiality to all participants in this study. When the survey was distributed a cover letter explaining the procedure and purpose for completing the questionnaire was included. The cover letter included information to respondents on the use of the data as suggested by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (2007). Instructions for returning the survey were provided.

In addition to the cover letter, a consent form for participating in the interpretation panel was also provided. The consent form provided the relevant information required by the

University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The form highlighted that I would undertake to safeguard the confidentiality of the discussion held by the panel, but I could not guarantee that other members of the panel would do so. The form asked all members to respect the confidentiality of the other members by not disclosing the contents of the discussion outside the panel. The discussion by the interpretation panel was not tape recorded while highlights, summaries, and key statements were recorded by the researcher. The comments of individual panellists could be indentified by their fellow panellists within the final documentation of the survey.

Summary

Chapter three presented the research design, theoretical basis, data collection procedures, as well as data analysis procedures for this study. The study was a mixed methods study that was sequential in nature as it incorporated a quantitative survey administered to a professional population in a single school division followed by two qualitative interpretation panels that analyzed the data collected. The purpose of collecting this data was to examine the perceptions of in-school administrators and teachers regarding effective instructional supervision and successful professional learning communities.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data derived from the survey. The data collected from the survey addressed five of the research questions from the study:

1. What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?

2. What is the level of agreement, by in-school administrators, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?

3. What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of successful professional learning communities, based on literature, are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?

4. What is the level of agreement, by in-school administrators, that the qualities of successful professional learning communities, based on literature, are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?

5. What are the criteria of successful professional learning communities, based on the literature, that are seen to relate to effective supervisory practice?

Commencing with a description of the school division in which the data were collected, the chapter provides the survey results presented in the order of the survey design. The first section of the survey provided demographic information collected from the participants. The second section focuses on professional learning communities, and the results are presented first

from all participants and then broken down by position. Following this, data concerning the perceptions of effective instructional supervision are summarized, followed by a comparison of the results by position. The fourth section of the survey provides data pertaining to qualities of professional learning communities critical to effective instructional supervision. The results are provided first for all participants, and then by position. The format of the survey consisted of ideal qualities based on the literature presented to the participants to consider their level of agreement or perspective. Participants used a six point Likert type scale to record their responses. The sections dealing with professional learning communities and instructional supervision had scales values where one represented "strongly disagree" moving to three being "somewhat disagree" and four "somewhat agree" and ended with six representing "strongly agree". In the final section of the survey, qualities of professional learning communities were rated based on how critical the quality was to effective instructional supervision. The scale ranged from one representing "not critical" to six being "very critical". The chapter concludes with further statistical analyses based upon selected demographics in which there were significant differences between groups on specific items from the survey.

Participating School Division

The survey was conducted in one school division, a rural school division surrounding a large urban centre. There were approximately 9100 students served by the school division in 44 schools served by approximately 650 professional staff, including in-school administrators, teachers, special education resource teachers, and professional staff based in the division office. The schools ranged from Hutterite colony schools, schools serving kindergarten to grade twelve, elementary schools and high schools.

At the time of the study, the school division had practiced a formal instructional supervision process and had established professional learning communities. During the course of the study these two practices were being reviewed and reaffirmed by the school division. As the school division had only been in existence since 2006, when there was a restructuring of all school divisions in the province, professional staff still connected much of their experiential knowledge of instructional supervision and professional learning communities to experiences in their former school division. The current school division was made up of three former school divisions, each with their unique instructional supervision policy and practice. The three former school divisions also had a different approach to professional learning communities and were at different points of implementation.

After 2006, professional staff were introduced to a common model for professional learning communities. There was an attempt to support all professional staff in a common division model. In late 2008, the school division realigned the professional learning communities' model in an effort to meet the needs of professional staff and support the school division goals. Staff had an option to either belong to a single school, a school partnership or a subject or grade based professional learning community. The overall framework of professional learning communities was also confirmed.

Instructional supervision practices were reviewed and aligned after 2006. After a review of research collected regarding instructional supervision practices and of past practices in 2007, a policy and a process designed to support professional staff was implemented in the fall of 2008. The policy developed applies to all staff within the division however the division began to develop supporting documents outlining more role-specific processes for staff.

Survey Population

The survey was sent to approximately one third of the schools in the selected school division. A proportional representation of all the schools within the school division was targeted. Within the selected schools, surveys were sent to all the teachers and in-school administrators. Table 4.1 indicates the number and type of schools that participated.

Table 4.1.
Schools Represented in the Study

	Elementary Schools	Kindergarten through Grade 12 Schools (K-12)	High Schools	Hutterite Colony Schools	Total
Total in School Division	15	13	8	8	44
Participating in the study	5	4	2	2	13

As illustrated in table 4.1, the number of schools were relatively proportional to the total number of schools in each category for the school division as a whole. There were five elementary schools, four kindergarten through grade twelve schools, two high schools and two Hutterite colony schools. In total, thirteen schools participated in the survey.

Demographic Data

Within the survey there were four sections for the respondents to complete. The first section of the survey collected information on the respondent for demographic data. The remaining three sections focused on gathering perceptions from survey participants in relation to the research questions. Within the first section, respondents were asked to provide their primary role of responsibility being either a teacher or an in-school administrator. If the respondent indicated they were a teacher the respondent was asked to identify the focus of teaching, such as

grade, subject, special education resource teacher, or teacher librarian. All respondents were also asked to indicate their years of experience.

Respondents

In the thirteen participating schools there were 210 surveys distributed. The population included 184 teachers and 26 in-school administrators (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2.
Overall Response Rate According to Position

Position	Surveys sent	Surveys returned	Response Rate (%)
Teacher*	184	89	48%
In-School Administrator	26	18	69%
Total	210	107	51%

includes classroom teachers, special education resource teachers and teacher librarians

Of the surveys sent to teachers, 89 or 48% were returned. In-school administrators returned 18 surveys which represented a response rate of 69%. Overall, a total of 107 surveys of the 210 sent out were returned, which represents 51% of the survey population.

Experience

In the survey each respondent was asked to indicate their years of experience in teaching. The response rates are presented in table 4.3. The years of experience were grouped into three categories, 0 to 10 years, 11 to 20 years and 21+ years.

In terms of years of experience, when it came to teachers, 37% with 0-10 years experience, 22% with 11-20 years, and 36% with 21+ years of experience. In regard to the in-school administrators and their respective years of experience, 17% had 0-10 years, 44% had 11-20 years and 28% had 21+ years.

Table 4.3.

Respondents: Organized According to Position and Years of Experience

Position	Years of Experience			
	(0-10 years)	(11-20 years)	(21+ years)	No Response
Teacher (N=89)	33 (37%)	20 (22%)	32 (36%)	4 (5%)
In-School Administrator (N=18)	3 (17%)	8 (44%)	5 (28%)	2 (11%)
Total	36 (34%)	28 (26%)	37 (35%)	6 (5%)

Grade Level

Respondents, who identified themselves as a teacher, were asked to provide the grade and/or subject they had primary responsibility for. From the responses collected teachers were grouped into one of four categories. The first category consisted of teachers who worked with students in kindergarten to grade four. In the next category, teachers responsible for grades five through eight were grouped while teachers who taught grades nine through twelve were combined in the third category. The fourth category consisted of teacher respondents who were either special education resource teachers, teacher librarians or those who did not specify their grade area focus. Respondents representing four grade categories K-4, 5-8, 9-12 and 'other' are described in table 4.4.

Within the 89 surveys returned by teachers, 27 were teaching in the kindergarten to grade four range, 17 were teaching in grades five though eight, 17 taught students in grades nine to twelve and 28 teachers were either special education resource teachers, teacher librarians or did not specify their grade level.

Table 4.4.

Respondents: Organized According to Grade Taught (Teachers N=89)

	Grade Level Category			
	K – 4	5 – 8	9-12	Other*
Total	27 (30%)	17 (19%)	17 (19%)	28 (32%)

includes special education resource teachers, teacher librarians, or grade not specified

Results by Research Question

The remaining three sections of the survey focused on the research questions for the study. The second section of the survey, section B, focused on the level of agreement respondents had with the presented qualities of successful professional learning communities using the scale of agreement provided. The data collected regarding professional learning communities addressed the questions: What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of successful professional learning communities, based on literature, are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities? What is the level of agreement, by in-school administrators, that the qualities of successful professional learning communities, based on literature, are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?

Section C of the survey was designed to identify respondents' level of agreement with the listed qualities of effective instructional supervision. The data addressed the questions: What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision? What is the level of agreement, by in-school administrators, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?

The fourth part of the survey, Section D, listed the qualities of successful professional learning communities and asked the respondent to rate each quality as to how critical it was to effective instructional supervision. The data collected addressed the question: What are the criteria of successful professional learning communities that are seen to relate to effective supervisory practice? In the presentation of the corresponding data it was assumed that a mean score in excess of 5 represented a very high level of agreement and a mean score in excess of 4 represented a high level of agreement.

Characteristics of Successful Professional Learning Communities

Survey Results: All Respondents. In the second section of the survey respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with listed qualities of successful professional learning communities.   The results are summarized in Table 4.5. The items in the survey are presented along with the number of responses for each item on the survey, the means and the standard deviations and the overall rank of the item from all participants, based on the mean.

The top five qualities, based on the highest mean scores, focused on two themes. The first theme consisted of reflective opportunities for growth and self-assessment to support professional improvement individually and collaboratively. The second theme consisted of teachers making connections between instructional practice and student learning. After reviewing the mean for each item, all the listed qualities had a mean of 4.29 or higher indicating that there was a high to a very high level of agreement with the quality as being necessary to the success of professional learning communities.

On the whole, the data indicated (as reflected in the standard deviations) fairly consistent agreement among participants. The mean scores ranged from a low of 4.29 to a high of 5.18.

Table 4.5.

Qualities of Successful Professional Learning Communities: Total Respondents

Item on Survey	N	Mean	SD	Rank
1. Teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice.	107	5.08	.85	3
2. Teachers examine evidence about the relationship between instructional practice, and student learning.	107	5.10	.85	2
3. Teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students.	107	5.18	.88	1
4. The focus is based on gathering evidence of student learning.	105	4.73	.94	11
5. The professional learning community identifies critical outcomes for the subject area being taught.	106	4.90	.93	6
6. The professional learning community develops assessment tools to collect evidence of student learning.	106	4.84	.89	8
7. The professional learning community utilizes collective inquiry into best practice.	103	4.55	.91	14
8. There is a commitment by the professional learning community members to their own continuous improvement.	105	4.96	.91	4
9. Teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices.	105	4.93	.89	5
10. Teachers use assessment results to gauge their own effectiveness in the classroom.	105	4.72	.88	12
11. Teachers focus on instruction and student learning specific to the settings in which they teach.	104	4.85	.85	7
12. The work of a professional learning community is sustained and continuous.	105	4.56	1.12	13
13. There is an opportunity for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the school.	105	4.81	1.19	9
14. There is an opportunity to reflect on teachers' influence about what and how they learn.	104	4.42	.98	16
15. Help teachers develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn.	104	4.29	.98	17
16. Time is provided for professional learning communities.	105	4.76	1.22	10
17. There is a framework for working effectively within a collaborative structure.	105	4.43	1.10	15

There was agreement that all the literature based items presented were important to the respondents understanding of the qualities of successful professional learning communities. The standard deviations indicate there was agreement by most respondents. However, there were only two items, *there is an opportunity for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the school* (item 13), and *time is provided for professional learning communities* (item 16), where the standard deviation was close to 1.20. There was not a large gap between the mean scores of the qualities ranked high and the qualities ranked near the bottom. The top five qualities of successful professional learning communities, as perceived by the respondents, were as follows:

- *teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students*;

- *teachers examine evidence about the relationship between instructional practice, and student learning*;

- *teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice*;

- *there is a commitment by the professional learning community members to their own continuous improvement*; and

- *teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices*.

While all the qualities had generally a high mean on the survey, with respect to the specific qualities of successful professional learning communities, the three qualities with a lower mean were: *teachers develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn*; *opportunity to reflect on teachers' influence about what and how they learn*; and *there is a framework for working effectively within a collaborative structure*.

Results: Summarized by Position. Using the demographic information collected, the results for each section of the survey were categorized to show the means, standard deviations and rank for teacher respondents in comparison to the in-school administrators. Table 4.6 contains the comparison for these two demographics.

From the teacher data, the highest mean scores reflecting the top five qualities of successful professional learning communities were as follows:

- *teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students*;

- *teachers examine evidence about the relationship between instructional practice, and student learning*;

- *teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice*;

- *there is a commitment by the professional learning community members to their own continuous improvement*; and

- *teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices*.

From this analysis it emerged that teachers tended to identify with qualities which emphasized student learning and continuous professional growth as qualities of successful professional learning communities.

Data indicated that in-school administrators had fairly similar perceptions as to those held by teachers regarding the items presented in the survey. The top five qualities, based on highest mean scores, identified by in-school administrators on the survey were:

Table 4.6.

Qualities of Successful Professional Learning Communities: Comparison of Mean Scores According to Position

Item on Survey	Teachers			In-School Administrators		
	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
1. Teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice.	5.06	.86	3	5.22	.81	2
2. Teachers examine evidence about the relationship between instructional practice, and student learning.	5.09	.83	2	5.17	.92	3
3. Teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students.	5.16	.88	1	5.28	.89	1
4. The focus is based on gathering evidence of student learning.	4.70	.97	9	4.89	.83	8
5. The professional learning community identifies critical outcomes for the subject area being taught.	4.89	.93	5	4.94	.94	7
6. The professional learning community develops assessment tools to collect evidence of student learning.	4.80	.91	6	5.06	.73	5
7. The professional learning community utilizes collective inquiry into best practice.	4.52	.91	10	4.72	.89	11
8. There is a commitment by the professional learning community members to their own continuous improvement.	4.91	.91	4	5.22	.88	2
9. Teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices.	4.89	.91	5	5.17	.79	3
10. Teachers use assessment results to gauge their own effectiveness in the classroom.	4.70	.89	9	4.83	.86	9
11. Teachers focus on instruction and student learning specific to the settings in which they teach.	4.80	.87	6	5.06	.73	5
12. The work of a professional learning community is sustained and continuous.	4.51	1.10	11	4.83	1.2	9
13. There is an opportunity for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the school.	4.75	1.24	7	5.11	.90	4
14. There is an opportunity to reflect on teachers' influence about what and how they learn.	4.38	.97	12	4.61	1.04	12
15. Help teachers develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn.	4.22	.98	14	4.61	.98	12
16. Time is provided for professional learning communities.	4.71	1.17	8	5.00	1.46	6
17. There is a framework for working effectively within a collaborative structure.	4.36	1.08	13	4.78	1.17	10

- *teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students*;

- *teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice*;

- *there is a commitment by the professional learning community members to their own continuous improvement*;

- *teachers examine evidence about the relationship between instructional practice, and student learning*; and

- *teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices.*

In-school administrators and teachers were similar in their perceptions for the top three items presented on the survey as the data indicated that three items were shared by both demographic groups. Teachers (mean=5.16) and in-school administrators (mean=5.28) had item three, *teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students*, as the highest ranked item. Item one, *teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice*, was ranked second by in-school administers (mean=5.22) and third by teachers (mean=5.06) while item two, *teachers examine evidence about the relationship between instructional practice, and student learning*, was ranked third by in-school administrators (mean=5.17) and second by teachers (mean=5.09).

The two qualities that had a lower mean on the list for both teachers and in-school administrators consisted of *helping teachers develop an understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn* and *there is a framework for working effectively within a collaborative structure.*

Additional Qualities Suggested by Respondents. In all sections on the survey,

respondents were able to add their own insights to the qualities provided in the survey. Of all 107

surveys completed, there were five qualities added in the professional learning communities

section. The five qualities provided by respondents in the survey were: there is a *common*

definition of professional learning communities across the school division; school professional

learning communities are successful; there is a connection of professional learning communities

to inspired learning opportunities provided in the school division; there is a clarity and

understanding with professional learning communities' purpose and function; and there is a

provision for grade alike learning opportunities. The suggested qualities were not included in the

analysis of results as the suggestions represented a very small percentage (3%) of the total

respondents in the survey.

Characteristics of Effective Instructional Supervision

Survey Results: All Respondents. The third section of the survey asked respondents to

indicate their level of agreement with each of the presented qualities of effective instructional

supervision. The items in the survey are presented along with the number of responses for each

item on the survey, the means and the standard deviations and the overall rank of the item from

all participants, based on the mean, are provided in Table 4.7.

Consistent with the results collected in the second section of the survey, the data in this

section indicated a consistent level of agreement among participants. Once again, there was not a

large gap between the mean scores of the qualities ranked at the top and those qualities ranked

near the bottom. The mean scores ranged from a low of 4.40 to a high of 5.02. There was

agreement that all the literature based items presented were important to the qualities of effective

Table 4.7.

Qualities Effective Instructional Supervision: Total Respondents

Item on Survey	N	Mean	SD	Rank
1. The educational experiences and learning of all students is enhanced.	106	4.57	.95	14
2. The professional growth of teachers is promoted.	106	4.93	.91	2
3. The increasing expectation of accountability is addressed.	106	4.74	.88	9
4. Data-based decision making by the teacher being supervised is used.	100	4.34	.89	18
5. The process of teachers' work rather than its outcome is a focus.	104	4.40	.89	17
6. The growth of the teacher being supervised is supported.	106	4.88	.84	4
7. Trust and positive communication exists between the supervisor and the teacher.	106	5.02	.82	1
8. There is encouragement for continuous reflection and inquiry into teaching by the teacher.	106	4.82	.78	5
9. The supervisor collects systematic data for the teacher.	105	4.43	.98	16
10. The interpretation and use of the data occurs in a collaborative nature between the supervisor and the teacher.	106	4.66	.97	11
11. A school wide climate that values community, collaboration and continuous growth is fostered.	106	4.88	.98	3
12. Teachers use student performance as evidence to demonstrate that learning has taken place.	106	4.81	.86	6
13. There is emphasis on setting meaningful and realistic professional goals measured in terms of improved student performance.	106	4.58	.94	13
14. Teachers are encouraged to analyze, individually and collectively, student work and use this data to address learning needs.	104	4.71	.95	10
15. Teachers are encouraged to design focused interventions to strengthen and enhance student learning in targeted areas.	104	4.77	.89	8
16. Teachers develop a plan for professional growth that is related to improving student learning and establishes them as life long learners.	104	4.80	.88	7
17. The work of the teacher, supervisor and additional resources is brought together through collaboration and commitment.	104	4.64	.95	12
18. The work of teachers is linked with the goals of the school improvement plan	104	4.53	1.04	15

instructional supervision. The data indicated that qualities with a higher mean dealt with the environment in which teachers and in-school administrators work and the atmosphere or tone taken during the process. At the same time those qualities which were more data driven were ranked lower among the items listed. The standard deviations indicate there was a high level of agreement by all respondents in their perceptions and there was more similarity across the group when compared to the standard deviations collected from the data on professional learning communities.

Based upon the mean scores for the entire group, the top five qualities of effective instructional supervision based on the responses on the survey included the following:

- *trust and positive communication exists between the supervisor and the teacher*;
- *the professional growth of teachers is promoted*;
- *a school wide climate that values community, collaboration and continuous growth is fostered*;
- *the growth of the teacher being supervised is supported*; and
- *there is encouragement for continuous reflection and inquiry into teaching by the teacher*.

The three items that received the lowest mean score from respondents include the *use of data-based decision making by the teacher being supervised*; *the primary focus is the process of teachers' work rather than its outcome*; and *the supervisor collects systematic data for the teacher*.

Results: Summarized by Position. From the data collected, a comparison between teacher and in-school administrator respondents is provided in table 4.8. The level of agreement with the qualities of effective instructional supervision between these two demographic groups is compared through the presentation of the means, the corresponding rank and the standard deviations for teacher respondents and in-school administrators.

When looking at the top five qualities of effective instructional supervision based on the responses by teachers, the nature of those responses seemed to focus on the strength of the relationships within the school and between the teacher and supervisor; the use of student data; and the promotion of professional growth.

The teacher responses to the survey indicated the top five qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on the mean scores, as follows:

- *trust and positive communication exists between the supervisor and the teacher*;

- *the professional growth of teachers is promoted*;

- *the growth of the teacher being supervised is supported*;

- *a school wide climate that values community, collaboration and continuous growth is fostered*; and

- *teachers use student performance as evidence to demonstrate that learning has taken place*.

The mean, based on the responses from in-school administrators, for all the qualities listed in this section were very close. The mean scores range from a low of 4.41 to a high of

Table 4.8.

Qualities of Effective Instructional Supervision: Perspectives According to Position

Item on Survey	Teachers			In-School Administrators		
	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
1. The educational experiences and learning of all students is enhanced.	4.53	.90	12	4.72	1.18	11
2. The professional growth of teachers is promoted.	4.90	.86	2	5.11	1.13	4
3. The increasing expectation of accountability is addressed.	4.69	.88	8	4.94	.87	6
4. Data-based decision making by the teacher being supervised is used.	4.31	.87	16	4.47	1.01	13
5. The process of teachers' work rather than its outcome is a focus.	4.40	.91	14	4.41	.80	14
6. The growth of the teacher being supervised is supported.	4.81	.83	3	5.22	.81	3
7. Trust and positive communication exists between the supervisor and the teacher.	4.94	.85	1	5.44	.51	1
8. There is encouragement for continuous reflection and inquiry into teaching by the teacher.	4.76	.77	5	5.11	.76	4
9. The supervisor collects systematic data for the teacher.	4.38	.98	15	4.67	.97	12
10. The interpretation and use of the data occurs in a collaborative nature between the supervisor and the teacher.	4.57	.99	11	5.06	.80	5
11. A school wide climate that values community, collaboration and continuous growth is fostered.	4.80	1.0	4	5.28	.83	2
12. Teachers use student performance as evidence to demonstrate that learning has taken place.	4.80	.89	4	4.89	.76	7
13. There is emphasis on setting meaningful and realistic professional goals measured in terms of improved student performance.	4.53	.93	12	4.78	.94	10
14. Teachers are encouraged to analyze, individually and collectively, student work and use this data to address learning needs.	4.64	.97	9	5.06	.80	5
15. Teachers are encouraged to design focused interventions to strengthen and enhance student learning in targeted areas.	4.71	.92	7	5.06	.73	5
16. Teachers develop a plan for professional growth that is related to improving student learning and establishes them as life long learners.	4.72	.90	6	5.22	.65	3
17. The work of the teacher, supervisor and additional resources is brought together through collaboration and commitment.	4.60	.94	10	4.83	1.04	8
18. The work of teachers is linked with the goals of the school improvement plan	4.48	1.01	13	4.81	1.13	9

5.44. In other words, there is a high to a very high level of agreement from in-school administrators. The top six items, based on the highest mean scores, are provided below:

- *trust and positive communication exists between the supervisor and the teacher*;

- *a school wide climate that values community, collaboration and continuous growth is fostered*;

- *the growth of the teacher being supervised is supported*;

- *teachers develop a plan for professional growth that is related to improving student learning and establishes them as lifelong learners;*

- *the professional growth of teachers is promoted*; and

- *there is encouragement for continuous reflection and inquiry into teaching by the teacher*.

Teachers and in-school administrators were similar in their perceptions for the first and third ranked items based on the survey data. Teachers (mean=4.94) and in-school administrators (mean=5.44) had item seven, *trust and positive communication exists between the supervisor and the teacher*, ranked first. Item six, *the growth of the teacher being supervised is supported*, was ranked third by teacher (mean=4.81) and in-school administrators (mean=5.22). In-school administrators also ranked third item sixteen, *teachers develop a plan for professional growth that is related to improving student learning and establishes them as life long learners*. Based on the teacher data (mean=4.90) item two*, the professional growth of teachers is promoted*, was ranked second. Ranked second for in-school administrators (mean=5.28) was item eleven, *a school wide climate that values community, collaboration and continuous growth is fostered*.

The three qualities ranked with the lowest mean within the list provided were the same for both in-school administrators and teachers. The qualities are as follows: *the process of teachers' work rather than its outcome is a focus*; *data-based decision making is used;* and, *the supervisor collects systematic data with a lower mean and corresponding rank*. There was not much difference in the means from the in-school administrator responses indicating that in-school administrators perceived almost all the qualities were necessary for effective instructional supervision.

Qualities of Professional Learning Communities Impacting Instructional Supervision

The final section of the survey was pivotal to the study. The focus of the study addressed the research question, What are the criteria of successful professional learning communities, based on the literature, that are seen to relate to effective supervisory practice? The data collected from this portion of the survey provided evidence of any possible correlation that could be made between professional learning communities and instructional supervision based on the qualities provided. It was assumed in the data that a mean score in excess of 4 on the six-point scale represented a factor that was perceived to be critical.

Survey Results: All Respondents. The final section of the survey elicited from the respondents their perspective on how critical the qualities of successful professional learning communities, presented in the second section of the survey, were to effective instructional supervision. The results are presented in Table 4.9. The items in the survey are presented along with the number of responses for each item on the survey, the means and the standard deviations and the overall rank of the item from all participants, based on the mean, are provided.

Table 4.9.

PLC Qualities Impacting Effective Instructional Supervision: Total Respondents

Item on Survey	N	Mean	SD	Rank
1. Teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice.	104	4.89	.99	11
2. Teachers examine evidence about the relationship between instructional practice, and student learning.	104	5.06	.81	8
3. Teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students.	106	5.30	.71	2
4. The focus is based on gathering evidence of student learning.	106	4.78	.96	13
5. The professional learning community identifies critical outcomes for the subject area being taught.	105	4.93	.94	10
6. The professional learning community develops assessment tools to collect evidence of student learning.	106	5.08	.83	7
7. The professional learning community utilizes collective inquiry into best practice.	105	4.76	.94	14
8. There is a commitment by the professional learning community members to their own continuous improvement.	106	5.38	.74	1
9. Teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices.	106	5.16	.73	5
10. Teachers use assessment results to gauge their own effectiveness in the classroom.	106	4.93	.90	10
11. Teachers focus on instruction and student learning specific to the settings in which they teach.	106	5.15	.78	6
12. The work of a professional learning community is sustained and continuous.	105	4.96	.89	9
13. There is an opportunity for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the school.	106	5.17	.80	4
14. There is an opportunity to reflect on teachers' influence about what and how they learn.	105	4.93	.76	10
15. Help teachers develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn.	106	4.84	.81	12
16. Time is provided for professional learning communities.	105	5.18	.91	3
17. There is a framework for working effectively within a collaborative structure.	105	4.96	.88	9

The initial characteristics that appear after reviewing the top qualities of professional learning communities that were considered critical to instructional supervision were as follows: the time and ability for teachers to collaborate when necessary; teachers need to be able to participate in on-going self-assessment to improve teaching and student learning; and there is a commitment to continuous improvement.

As with the previous two sections of the survey, the data in the fourth section indicated a consistent level of agreement among participants. In addition, there was not a large gap between the mean scores of the qualities ranked at the top and those qualities ranked near the bottom. The mean scores in this survey section ranged from a low of 4.78 to a high of 5.38, which indicated that respondents felt all the items were of a high to a very high critical impact. There was agreement that all the literature based items presented as qualities of professional learning communities had an impact on effective instructional supervision. The standard deviations indicate there was agreement by all respondents in their perceptions. Based upon the mean scores across items for the entire group, the top five qualities of successful professional learning communities that were considered critical to effective instructional supervision were as follows:

- *there is a commitment by the professional learning community members to their own continuous improvement*;

- *teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students*;

- *time is provided for professional learning communities*;

- *there is an opportunity for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the school*; and

- *teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices*.

Ranked lower in mean score on the survey were the qualities: *professional learning community utilizing collective inquiry*; *focus based on gathering evidence of student learning*; and *helping teachers develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn*.

Results: Summarized by Position. The results for this section of the survey for teacher respondents in comparison to those of the in-school administrators according to the corresponding means, standard deviations and rank is displayed in table 4.10.

When looking at the top five items critical to instructional supervision, as perceived by the teacher respondents, the following two themes emerged: there is an opportunity for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the school who are committed to continuous improvement and creating an opportunity for on-going self–assessment; and teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning specific to the settings in which they teach. Among teachers, there is generally a high level of agreement with the top five qualities based on the means and standard deviations.

The teacher responses indicated the top five qualities of professional learning communities critical to effective instructional supervision, based on the highest mean scores, as follows:

- *there is a commitment by the professional learning community members to their own continuous improvement;*

- *teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their*

  students;

Table 4.10.

PLC Qualities of Effective Instructional Supervision: Comparison of Mean Scores According to Position

Item on Survey	Teachers			In-School Administrators		
	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
1. Teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice.	4.78	.99	14	5.44	.78	3
2. Teachers examine evidence about the relationship between instructional practice, and student learning.	5.00	.80	8	5.33	.84	5
3. Teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students.	5.27	.72	2	5.44	.62	3
4. The focus is based on gathering evidence of student learning.	4.72	.99	15	5.11	.68	8
5. The professional learning community identifies critical outcomes for the subject area being taught.	4.84	.96	12	5.39	.70	4
6. The professional learning community develops assessment tools to collect evidence of student learning.	5.06	.84	7	5.17	.79	7
7. The professional learning community utilizes collective inquiry into best practice.	4.71	.94	16	5.00	.91	10
8. There is a commitment by the professional learning community members to their own continuous improvement.	5.35	.76	1	5.50	.62	2
9. Teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices.	5.14	.71	4	5.28	.83	6
10. Teachers use assessment results to gauge their own effectiveness in the classroom.	4.86	.93	11	5.28	.67	6
11. Teachers focus on instruction and student learning specific to the settings in which they teach.	5.11	.78	5	5.33	.77	5
12. The work of a professional learning community is sustained and continuous.	4.90	.90	10	5.28	.75	6
13. There is an opportunity for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the school.	5.15	.78	3	5.28	.90	6
14. There is an opportunity to reflect on teachers' influence about what and how they learn.	4.91	.76	9	5.06	.80	9
15. Help teachers develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn.	4.82	.81	13	4.94	.80	11
16. Time is provided for professional learning communities.	5.10	.94	6	5.56	.62	1
17. There is a framework for working effectively within a collaborative structure.	4.90	.86	10	5.28	.90	6

- *there is an opportunity for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the school;*

- *teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices;* and

- *teachers focus on instruction and student learning specific to the settings in which they teach.*

The three themes based on the top five items critical to instructional supervision, as perceived by in-school administrators include: time is provided for those involved; there is a commitment to continuous improvement and to identify the critical outcomes for the subject area being taught; and teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice and make the necessary changes to improve teaching and student learning. The data provides evidence that in-school administrators typically rated each individual quality as being highly critical to effective instructional supervision.

The top five qualities based on highest mean scores identified by in-school administrators on the survey were:

- *time is provided for professional learning communities;*

- *there is a commitment by the professional learning community members to their own continuous improvement;*

- *teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice;*

- *teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students;* and

- *the professional learning community identifies critical outcomes for the subject area being taught.*

In-school administrators and teachers were similar in their perceptions for the top five items presented on the survey with respect to three of the items. Item eight, *there is a commitment by the professional learning community members to their own continuous improvement*, was ranked first for teachers (mean=5.35) and second for in-school administrators (mean=5.50). Item three, *teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students*, was ranked second for teachers (mean=5.27) and third for in-school administrators (mean=5.44). Ranked fifth for teachers (mean=5.11) and in-school administrators (mean=5.33) was item eleven, *teachers focus on instruction and student learning specific to the settings in which they teach*.

While comparing the lower ranked items based on mean scores, teachers and in-school administrators were different except for one. Item seven, *the professional learning community utilizes collective inquiry into best practice*, had a lower mean score for both in-school administrators and teachers.

Further Statistical Analysis

ANOVA tests were conducted to identify the significance of differences among survey respondents based on years of experience and grade level taught. While there was generally a high level of agreement by all respondents, there were a few significant differences. These are highlighted below.

Table 4.11 presents survey items of successful professional learning communities that had a significance level of .08 or lower between respondents based on years of experience in levels of agreement of qualities of successful professional learning communities.

Table 4.11.

Qualities of Successful Professional Learning Communities: Comparison of Mean Scores According to Years of Experience

	Mean Score Per Experience Category				
Item on Survey	0-10	11-20	21+	F score	Sig.
	(N=36)	(N=28)	(N=37)		
4. The focus is based on gathering evidence of student learning.	4.50	4.56	5.00	3.08	.050
9. Teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices.	4.63	5.00	5.11	2.89	.060

The professional learning community quality that had the most difference was, *the focus of the professional learning community is based on gathering evidence of student learning*. When it came to item four, those who were in the category with the greater level of experience had a higher mean score of 5.0 compared to the mean score of 4.5 from respondents that had 0-10 years of experience. The item, *teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices* had a significance score of .060. Respondents with 0-10 years provided this quality with a mean score of 4.63 while a mean score of 5.11 was provided by respondents with 21+ years of experience. It appeared that respondents with a greater level of experience tended to have a higher level of agreement with professional learning communities

consisting of a focus on gathering evidence of student learning. Possible reasons for the difference are presented in chapter five.

When it came to the professional learning communities' qualities there were few significant differences within the data analyzed according to years of experience. There was a slight difference found in the results, as identified by years of experience, as presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12.

PLC Qualities Critical to Effective Instructional Supervision: Significance of Differences According to Years of Experience

Item on Survey	Mean			F score	Sig.
	0-10	11-20	21+		
9. Teachers use assessment results to gauge their own effectiveness in the classroom.	4.74	5.25	4.84	2.7	.072

Within the group, respondents with years of experience of 11-20 years had a higher mean score than was the case with the other two years of experience categories on the item. The quality, *teachers use assessment results to gauge their own effectiveness in the classroom*, was selected by respondents with 0-10 years of experiences with a mean of 4.74. Survey respondents with 11-20 years of experience had a mean of 5.25 on that item.

To examine differences in perception among teacher respondents according to grade level, there was one significant difference found in the survey data when analyzed using ANOVA. Table 4.13 highlights this.

4.13.

Qualities of Effective Instructional Supervision: Significance of Differences According to Grade Level Taught

Item on Survey	Mean Score Per Grade Level Category				F score	Sig.
	K-4 (N=27)	5-8 (N=17)	9-12 (N=17)	Other (N=28)		
12. Teachers use student performance as evidence to demonstrate that learning has taken place.	4.89	4.38	4.53	5.11	3.19	.028*

There was a significant difference in the mean score of teacher respondents in the grade categories of K-4, 5-8, 9-12, and 'other'. The category 'other' included special education resource teachers, teacher librarians, or teachers who did not specify their grade level taught when completing the survey. There was a difference when respondents had to rate their level of agreement on the item, *teachers use student performance as evidence to demonstrate that learning has taken place*. The lowest mean was found in grades 5-8 teachers and the highest mean of 5.11 was found to be selected by teachers who were categorized as 'other'. Possible reasons for this significance are presented in chapter five.

Earlier in the chapter the comparison of mean scores was provided between the respondents who were teachers and respondents who were in-school administrators. After running ANOVA tests on the results significant scores were found in qualities of effective instructional supervision and in qualities of professional learning communities critical to

effective instructional supervision. The results that had significance score of less than .080 in

effective instructional supervision qualities are presented in table 4.14.

Table 4.14.

Qualities of Effective Instructional Supervision: Significance of Differences According to Position

Item on Survey	Mean Score Per Position Category		F score	Sig.
	Teacher	In-school Administrator		
	(N=89)	(N=18)		
7. Trust and positive communication exists between the supervisor and the teacher.	4.94	5.44	5.93	.017*
16. Teachers develop a plan for professional growth that is related to improving student learning and establishes them as life long learners.	4.72	5.22	5.18	.025*
6. The growth of the teacher being supervised is supported.	4.81	5.22	3.79	.054
10. The interpretation and use of the data occurs in a collaborative nature between the supervisor and the teacher.	4.57	5.06	3.75	.056
11. A school wide climate that values community, collaboration and continuous growth is fostered.	4.80	5.28	3.69	.057

There were two qualities in which there was a significant difference between teacher and

in-school administrator perceptions. Those items were, *trust and positive communication*

between the supervisor and the teacher, with a mean of 4.94 for teacher respondents and a mean

of 5.44 for in-school administrators, and *teachers develop a plan for professional growth that is*

related to improving student learning and establishes them as life long learners. In-school

administrators had a mean level of agreement of 5.22 while teachers had a mean level of

agreement of 4.72. However this is not to say that teachers were not in favour, but agreed at a

lower level than in-school administrators. Each item was agreed to be a quality of effective

instructional supervision. Possible reasons about why the items were significant between these

two demographic groups will be presented in chapter five. Additionally three other items

approached significance. For each case in-school administrators perceived the items higher than

the teachers.

Two additional significant differences were found between teachers and in-school

administrators when analyzing the results of qualities of professional learning communities

critical to instructional supervision. Table 4.15 identifies those qualities.

Table 4.15.

PLC Qualities Critical to Effective Instructional Supervision: Comparison of Mean Responses According to Position

Item on Survey	Mean Score Per Position Category		F score	Sig.
	Teacher	In-school Administrator		
1. Teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice.	4.78	5.44	7.21	.008*
5. The professional learning community identifies critical outcomes for the subject area being taught.	4.84	5.39	5.28	.024*
16. Time is provided for professional learning communities.	5.10	5.56	3.81	.054
1. Teachers use assessment results to gauge their own effectiveness in the classroom.	4.86	5.28	3.25	.074

The quality, *teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice* had

the most significant difference between teachers and in-school administrators. Teachers had a

mean level of agreement of 4.78 while in-school administrators had a mean score of 5.44. With a

significance level of .024 the quality, *the professional learning community identifies critical outcomes for the subject area being taught*, had a mean level of agreement by teachers of 4.84 and 5.39 by in-school administrators. Even though these items had a significant difference between these two demographic groups, both groups agreed that the items were critical to instructional supervision. Items sixteen and one approached significance. In each case, in-school administrators perceived the item at a higher level than teacher respondents. Chapter five will present possible reasons for the differences found between teachers and in-school administrators in their perspectives related to table 4.15.

Summary

Chapter four presented the results of the survey. The purpose of collecting the data were to examine the perceptions of in-school administrators and teachers regarding effective instructional supervision, successful professional learning communities and how critical qualities of professional learning communities are to effective instructional supervision. A summary of the school division involved and the corresponding demographics of the respondents were provided. The data results were then highlighted by all respondents and then broken down by the position of teacher and in-school administrator. Later in the chapter survey results with some variance between the respondent demographics were presented.

The data as has been discussed earlier in the chapter is presented in graph form. As illustrated in figure 4.1. Figure 4.1 provides in graph form the mean score for in-school administrators and teachers for each of the three sections of the survey. Generally all respondents provided a positive level of agreement to all qualities presented.

Figure 4.1: Mean Comparison by Position

Qualities of Successful Professional Learning Communities: Perspectives According to Position

(Mean vs. B1–B17, series: Teachers, In-School Admin)

Qualities of Effective Instructional Supervision: Perspectives According to Position

(Mean vs. C1–C18, series: Teachers, In-School Admin)

Qualities Impacting Effective Instructional Supervision: Perspectives According to Position

(Mean vs. D1–D17, series: Teachers, In-School Admin)

As illustrated in figure 4.1 the following themes emerged from the data collected:

1.   There was a high level of agreement with all the qualities provided of successful professional learning communities.

2.   There was a high level of agreement with all the qualities provided of effective instructional supervision.

3.   There was a consistent agreement by teachers and in-school administrators on all items for all sections.

4.   All qualities of professional learning communities were seen to have an impact upon instructional supervision with some differences between teachers and in-school administrators.

Chapter four constituted a basic presentation of the data collected from the survey. In order to make sense of this, interpretation panels were utilized. In the coming chapter the discussion from two panels, one consisting of teachers who completed the survey and the other consisting of in-school administrators who completed the survey are presented along with the connection made to the literature.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF DATA, SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the discussion from two panels, one consisting of teachers and the other consisting of in-school administrators who completed the survey. A description of the interpretation panels is provided, followed by the analysis of the data. The data are analyzed beginning with qualities of successful professional learning communities, followed by qualities of effective instructional supervision and concluding with qualities of professional learning communities that are critical to effective instructional supervision. A discussion for each section connecting the analysis to the literature is provided. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the implications of the key findings of this study for practice, research, theory and policy.

Description of the Interpretation Panels

The interpretation panels analyzed and interpreted the data collected from the survey that was distributed in the study. The panels looked at information collected from the summaries as was presented in chapter four, including the means and standard deviations for each item presented in the survey, results of each question categorized by years of experience and role in the school of survey participants, and items representing highest levels of agreement for each section in the survey.   Panellists were asked as to what resonates from the information presented, and to discuss possible reasons for the results.

Members of the panels were selected from respondents of the survey who had submitted an interpretation panel consent form when they completed the survey. Two dates were

established to hold the interpretation panel sessions and then participant selection occurred. All

survey participants who completed an interpretation panel consent form were entered either onto

a teacher list or an in-school administrator list. Then choosing a random number between one

and six, I moved down the list that many spaces to select the participants that were invited to

participate. Invitations to possible participants continued to be sent out until either the panel had

achieved a goal of five panellists or the date of the meeting was to occur within two days. The

first interpretation panel consisted of five in-school administrators, while the second panel

consisted of three teachers.

Each panellist received an interpretation panel package (Appendix G) consisting of a

copy of the survey results presented in Chapter 4 prior to the meeting. During the meeting, the

panellists moved through the data considering the following questions that I developed: (a) Are

there any findings that surprised you? (b) Why or why not? (c) And, what resonated with you?

After reviewing the data the panels were asked: (a) What were the most important findings? (b)

What were the implications of these findings for the operation of a school system? (c) What were

the silences? (d) And, what things were we saying about instructional supervision and

professional learning communities that had not been said in the data? There was an assumption

by myself that the individual panellists would be honest, and be objective as possible while

providing their perceptions based on their experience. The panellists provided a perspective that

was based on their individual experiences. After each panel had met, I summarized the

discussion of the panellists and provided a copy of the summary for each panellist. The analysis

of the interpretation panels mirrored those that I had after reviewing the data collected. While the

interpretation panels confirmed my analysis in several ways, they contributed perspectives in

which I had not considered in others. The information collective in this qualitative portion of the

study provided a greater depth to the analysis had it just been myself. It should be noted that the role of the interpretation panel was to provide practitioner perspectives on the data and to guide the subsequent analysis and discussion of the data.   This then became a significant part of the discussion and implications chapter, however I incorporated my own opinion and discussion as I provided perspectives on the data.

Analysis: Successful Professional Learning Communities

The data collected from the survey regarding qualities of successful professional learning communities addressed two research questions: *What is the level of agreement by teachers that the qualities of successful professional learning communities based on literature are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?* And, *what is the level of agreement by in-school administrators that the qualities of successful professional learning communities based on literature are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?*

Teacher Interpretation Panel

The interpretation panel first looked at the overall responses of section B of the survey. The panel believed there was a preference for a professional learning community model that was centred on being directed by the participants rather than by the school division. There was a general surprise that certain qualities were ranked lower by respondents. Table 5.1 lists the qualities the panel highlighted as being lower than anticipated.

In comparing the items identified in Table 5.1, the panel felt that the ranking of item four, *focus is based on gathering evidence of student learning*, was in contrast to the work being done within the school division as one panellist stated, "There is an emphasis on evidence of student learning within the division." The perception offered by the panellist's personal experience led to

a discussion on how the school division had shared with staff, through a variety of activities, that

the focus of division initiatives and goals were based on student learning. The panel considered

items sixteen and seventeen, *time is provided for professional learning communities*, and *there is*

a framework for working effectively within a collaborative structure, as essential to the success

of professional learning communities within the division. The panel acknowledged that

respondents agreed with the items presented but panellists had expected the rankings based on

mean scores to be higher, as one panellist shared, "Time is essential to make professional

learning communities work."

Table 5.1.

Teacher Interpretation Panel: Qualities of PLC's Ranked Lower Than Expected

Item on Survey	N	Mean	SD	Rank
4. The focus is based on gathering evidence of student learning.	105	4.73	.94	11
15. Help teachers develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn.	104	4.29	.98	17
16. Time is provided for professional learning communities.	105	4.76	1.22	10
17. There is a framework for working effectively within a collaborative structure.	105	4.43	1.10	15

Despite the lower ranking of item sixteen, the panel felt that the respondents tended to

indicate through many of the items that were ranked higher, a theme of *time* as impacting the

success of professional learning communities if the qualities used the terms *time*, or *opportunity*.

The panel noted that qualities that did have a connection to *time* tended to be ranked lower by

teacher respondents than by in-school administrators. A panellist shared "teachers are generally

saying we don't have enough time to deeply reflect", while another panellist stated "admin [in-

school administrators] says it's important and that teachers have enough time." One suggested reason provided was through item thirteen, *there is an opportunity for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the school.* According to the panel, item thirteen was ranked seventh for teachers compared to fourth for in-school administrators because "teachers have been overwhelmed by the work that has been expected.", and "the frequency of the time provided by the school division for meeting as professional learning communities [which during the year of the study was four times] made it harder to collaborate with others." One panellist shared that "when working in a PLC, teachers spend much time on reviewing the work previously done and then it takes time to get right down to new PLC work." The panel has suggested that some respondents may not have necessarily considered the items listed in the survey in the context of a 'successful' professional learning community but rather through their personal experiences.

In-School Administrator Panel

The in-school administrator panel considered the results of the survey while bringing in some of their own theoretical knowledge of professional learning communities by referring to the work of Richard DuFour. The panel felt that the respondents recognized that the focus of professional learning communities was on learning rather than teaching. Item ten, *teachers use assessment results to gauge their own effectiveness in the classroom*, ranked twelfth, and is the basis for the school division model that the panel connected to DuFour. The panel felt that the lower ranking of item ten may have been the result of three former school divisions becoming one school division during restructuring of school divisions in the province. The model and expectations of the professional learning communities was different in each of the former school divisions. The panel suggested the possibility that there continued to be three different

interpretations of professional learning communities within the school division with the addition of the model that was being used by the current school division.

The lack of experience with successful professional learning communities within the school division may have contributed to how some respondents completed the survey, according to the panel. The reorganization of the model of professional learning communities within the school division in the fall of 2008 came at a time when many of the professional learning communities were beginning to work on collecting and interpreting assessment data to provide evidence of student learning. The reorganizing of the professional learning communities meant that some individuals did not have an opportunity to experience the use of systematic assessment data to promote teacher effectiveness and student learning associated with DuFour, before completing the survey for the study. The panel also suggested that the dissatisfaction felt by many teachers with the division model leading up to the reorganization likely had some impact on the perceptions held by teacher respondents.

When considering the lowest ranked item (item fifteen), *help teachers develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn*, a panellist felt that, "Teachers are for the most part practical and concrete in their work and not as theoretical." Teachers that used theory or research in practice are the exception as it was perceived to be generally easier to use the advice of an immediate colleague to assist with practice than refer to literature or research. The panel felt that the top five qualities in this section were more individual in nature and not as collaborative, as one panellist suggested, "Maybe participants are more interested in what is in it for them." The panel posed the question, "Were the respondents more interested in what the professional learning communities can do for themselves individually, or as a collective?" One

member of the panel used the term "personal learning communities" to refer to individuals

concerned about the impact of their own practice and what the personal interest or benefit of the

process may be. The term was used repeatedly during the discussion when the discussion

focused on individual needs and perspectives.

The panel considered that in-school administrators played more of a managerial role,

requiring knowledge of theory, more than teachers. As a result, in-school administrators may be

more aware of the expectations and best practice for professional learning communities. The

panel felt that in some respects, in-school administrators were more positive in their perception

of professional learning communities, but in a sense also perhaps, as one panellist noted, "Naïve

in assuming that teachers were aware that there were adequate opportunities to engage in and

understand the process."

It was felt that teachers cannot find the time to collaborate in an authentic manner with

others, as one panellist observed, "Teachers in small schools don't have time to collaborate."

Additionally, the panel determined that time was a necessary component for professional

learning communities to be truly successful. The panel recognized that within a rural school

division, time and distance were obstacles in implementing professional learning communities.

One panellist commented, "How does it [professional learning communities] transfer to a rural

school division? The mandate on our time and the distance between us can be obstacles for our

reality."

Panel Comparison

Both the in-school administrator and teacher panels ultimately concluded that the critical

element of time provided for the work of professional learning communities was an important

contributor to the success of professional learning communities. The survey results provided evidence for the panels that in-school administrators were more positive in their perception of the qualities of professional learning communities presented based on the literature. The assumption was made that in-school administrators had a higher level of satisfaction with the process. There was acknowledgement from the teacher panel that teacher respondents may not have as much theoretical background as in-school administrators when considering qualities of successful professional learning communities. One in-school administrator suggested, "Teachers want more evidence about the benefits of professional learning communities." Both panels considered access to the theory behind professional learning communities as necessary for teachers to fully engage in the process if the school division hoped to support successful collaborations as one panellist remarked, "If we don't understand the theory we are lost." Overall the panels felt that the mean scores for teachers and in-school administrators were close and there was not much of a discrepancy between respondent groups in the survey data.

The timing of the study and the school division process of reorganizing how professional learning communities were supported was brought up by both panels. A panellist from the in-school administrator panel suggested that "the negative experiences may have had an impact for teachers when completing the survey." One teacher panellist shared, "There seems to be a preference for a teacher directed professional learning community rather than a top down model." There was agreement by the teacher interpretation panel that changes could be made to enhance professional learning communities but not on what would be the impetus for the changes. An in-school administrator observed, "We stumbled a lot. We learned a lot. Things are getting better when it appears to be more ground up, where the teams determine what needs to be done and how to assess. It's not top down."

Panellists were surprised when they reviewed the difference evident when teachers were categorized according to experience. Item four, *the focus is based on gathering evidence of student learning*, had a significance level of .05, with the difference occurring between teachers who had 0 to 10 years of experience and teachers with 21+ years of experience. The myth of more experienced teachers following old habits was not supported by the results according to the teacher panel. Both panels remarked how new teachers early in their career have more of a focus on their professional skills and gradually move towards more focus on student learning as one in-school administrator offered, "Earlier in your career it is a focus on survival and developing style rather than on student learning practices." Teachers with 21+ years of experience also have faced a variety of changes in education and these experiences allowed them to move through the new initiatives towards more supporting student learning more quickly than newer teachers. Experienced teachers tended to be more confident in their ability as an educator and to do what is right and what is necessary according to panellists. There was also consideration that teachers with fewer years of experience are still connected to their educational training. They remain focussed on building or acquiring skills to be a successful professional. A teacher observed that "Over the course of years teachers ultimately learn that the bottom line of all activity within the school is 'how did the students learn?'"

Discussion

The qualities of professional learning communities presented in the survey were based on the literature. The results of the survey and the discussion of the interpretation panels confirmed that the qualities were indeed contributors to the success of professional learning communities.

Teachers and in-school administrators did not differ in the overall results from the survey on professional learning communities. The consistency in their responses indicated an awareness of the basic principles associated with the theory behind professional learning communities. The respondents had an awareness of the conceptual framework of professional learning communities (Eaker et al., 2002) that was necessary to implement a shared mission, vision, values and goals, use of collaborative teams, and a focus on results.

At the same time, the interpretation panels highlighted some inconsistencies among teachers and in-school administrators within the school division regarding the professional learning communities model. The inconsistency would support the literature that indicated culture and the structure of professional learning communities must be considered in the development of professional learning communities and that the cultural changes necessary are often the most challenging (Wells & Feun, 2007). The interpretation panels indicated that not all teachers had fully realized the potential of, or gained a complete theoretical understanding of, professional learning communities. Huffman (2003) stated that it is critical to understand that the emergence of a strong, shared vision based on shared values provides the foundation for staff member commitment and sustained school growth.

The interpretation panels confirmed that time is an important attribute of a successful professional learning community. Literature indicated that little time provided for collaboration gets in way of the work in professional learning communities (Martin-Kniep, 2004). Time needs to be more than a few opportunities to work with colleagues and participants must feel that meeting with colleagues is purposeful and continuous. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) indicated that activities in which teachers learn best are both sustainable and continuous.

The discussions from the interpretation panel indicated that a transition was occurring within the school division related to moving the work of teachers from isolation to collaborative partnerships. The initial work of establishing professional learning communities in the school division proved difficult due to the differing interpretations among professional staff about the work and process required. Within the survey data, respondents agreed with the model characteristics however the interpretation panels acknowledged that in reality these ideals may not have been necessarily used. This possible gap must be addressed as the work of teachers in professional learning communities needs to be supported by central office staff and school leaders (Kaplan & Owings, 2002) in order to support professional growth. It does not take long for educators to become cynical of reform (Buffum & Hinman, 2006).

The in-school administrator panel identified the gap in awareness of theory and division initiatives between in-school administrators and teachers to be an obstacle to the success of professional learning communities. This gap reinforces the idea that shared leadership is necessary as it provides shared responsibility, broad-based decision making and more accountability (Huffman & Hipp, 2003). Teachers learn best when they are provided an opportunity to develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

The difference found on one item between respondents with 21+ years of experience and teachers with 0-10 years of experience indicates the importance of professional learning communities to promote "competence" among teachers involved (Schmoker, 2004). Working with colleagues also provides new teachers the social interaction and informal learning opportunities to learn about the standards, norms, and values of the profession (McLaughlin &

Talbert, 2006) and the school division.   Tauer and Tate (1998) commented how researchers are struck by the way teachers grow professionally over their careers. Furthermore, Tauer and Tate suggested first and second year teachers are primarily concerned with simply surviving the day, week and year. As they gain experience and develop routines they understand better how to transmit subject matter. This would seem to be a critical consideration in planning for effective teacher induction.

Analysis: Effective Instructional Supervision

The two research questions: *What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?,* and *What is the level of agreement by, in-school administrators, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?* were addressed using data collected from the third section of the survey on effective instructional supervision.

Teacher Interpretation Panel

The panel of teachers felt that the top five ranked qualities receiving the highest mean scores in effective instructional supervision were accurate in that they included the themes of trust, growth and reflection which the panel felt were necessary for the supervisory process to be effective.   In addition, the teachers' pointed out that the top three ranked qualities focused more on the individual teacher or the relationships necessary at the school level rather than any initiative or action provided at the school division level.

A trend noticed by the panel indicated that items connecting data of student learning as qualities of professional growth, such as items three, ten, fourteen, and seventeen, were less

valued than other qualities. The panel suggested one reason may be that teachers had a concern with using evidence of student learning or data within the instructional supervision process and a possible connection to "merit pay", where the teacher maintains employment based on student success. Panellists felt that teachers want to be supported, need input from others but do not want to be judged. One panellist shared "I don't want student work evaluated in my personal supervision process. But I value student input."

When reviewing the results between teachers and in-school administrators, the panel noted that the mean for in-school administrators was higher for all items presented compared to the teacher respondents. The panel felt there was a discrepancy in perceptions between the two demographic groups. They determined that in-school administrators tended to "do" the instructional supervision process while teachers tended to "receive" the process. At the same time "Teachers are maybe saying it is not occurring. Administration really say it's important but does it really happen in reality?" questioned one panellist. The process appeared to be top down and not as authentic for teachers. Teachers tended to complete what was required by the format of the instructional supervision process being used. One teacher commented "The instructional supervision process is not as authentic for teachers."

Item twelve, *teachers use student performance as evidence to demonstrate that learning has taken place,* was perceived differently by in-school administrators (ranked seventh) and teachers (ranked fourth) possibly due to the fact that administrators were not seeing the results of student learning within the instructional supervision process. The panel suggested teachers were making adjustments to their instructional practices based on evidence of student learning but they were not actually sharing this process with others, in particular their supervisor. In-school

administrators may not have been aware of all the decisions and actions teachers made based on the evidence of student learning especially if they were part of a large staff. In reality, the panel felt that there was really no current provision for opportunities through which teachers could share the results of student learning with others in a formal process.

In-School Administrator Panel

The in-school administrator panel viewed the results and determined that qualities of a "warm fuzzy" nature had a higher mean and were ranked much higher than those qualities that were related to the use of "data". The panel felt that the practice of using data in instructional supervision was not common within the school division as one in-school administrator concluded, "In terms of using data in supervision, we are not yet there." Item nine, *the supervisor collects systematic data for the teacher*, may have had a lower ranking due to the fact that the main focus and activity of the professional growth, supervision and evaluation process used within the school division was the completion of professional growth plans. At the same time a panellist suggested that the requirement for professional growth plans was artificial and imposed. A panellist commented, "You can't mandate what matters."[1]   In-school administrators valued the professional growth plans but perhaps some teachers simply wanted to get it done and did not use it as a tool for reflection and professional growth due to the lack of a vested interest in the process. Additionally, some panellists shared that "Staff were not pleased that they had to have a goal that aligned with school or division goals." The panel suggested that all teachers needed the opportunity to address what they perceived as important, being flexible enough to adapt throughout the year to accommodate what was occurring in the classroom or the needs of students.

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[1] Likely referring to Fullan, 1993

The panel concluded teachers were practical in their perspectives while in-school administrators "Tended to look at the big-picture." Teachers were seen to need more than paper work tasks to be reflective practitioners and to be able to engage in professional activities that responded to events in the classroom or to student needs. It was noted that often these emerging needs were not related to what was developed in the professional growth plan earlier in the year and did not accommodate the change in focus of the teacher. A panellist remarked that "Ideally an effective instructional supervision process would provide for a menu of activities from which teachers could choose, rather than a particular mandated task."

Panel Comparison.

Both interpretation panels made note that item eighteen, *the work of teachers is linked with the goals of the school improvement plan*, was ranked lowest according to mean scores. An observation by the teacher panel explained that a lot of time was used at the school level for the development and implementation of school goals and yet of all qualities linked to instructional supervision this quality was deemed not as important for respondents. One teacher commented, "Funny that making goals for the school takes so much of our time and it is rated fifteenth." The in-school administrator panel wondered if the results indicated that teachers did not feel that they had ownership of the school improvement goals. One in-school administrator asked, "Does it really impact the classroom?"

Agreement occurred between both panels regarding the role teachers and administrators have in the instructional process. Teachers tended to focus on their individual situation, further described by the in-school administrators as "personal learning community", while the in-school administrators had already considered the larger vision of connecting personal professional

goals to professional learning communities, school goals and division goals. One in-school administrator offered the observation that "Personal professional growth plans are now being connected to PLC goals, school goals and is now more bottom up. Especially with the changes being made in PLC's."

The panels reviewed the difference that occurred with item 12 in the survey that covered effective instructional supervision. The item, *teachers use student performance as evidence to demonstrate that learning has taken place*, had a significant level within the responses that occurred among teacher respondents and their grade level taught. The mean for teachers in K-4 was 4.89, in grades 5-8 was 4.38, in grades 9-12 was 4.53 and teachers in the category 'other' had a mean level of agreement of 5.11.

Both panels agreed on possible reasons for the difference. K-4 teachers were typically involved in more assessments to monitor student learning and performance as was demonstrated with the kindergarten screening program that occurred in the school division. One teacher shared with the panel, "K-4 measure things that are not always objective. It can be harder to say their performance is evidence of their growth." Teachers within the category 'other' included special education resource teachers who as part of their role within the school used a wide variety of assessments to support student learning. There was an expectation that all special education resource teachers used SMART[2] goals in all student programming. The use of SMART goals by special education resource teachers may have lead to a higher level of agreement with this item on the survey. It was also highlighted in the teacher panel that teachers in the middle grades of 5-

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[2] SMART refers to goal planning that addresses the following: **S** – Specific & Sustainable **M** – Measurable **A** – Achievable **R** – Realistic **T** – Timely

8 had an additional focus of the emotional maturity of their students which sometimes tended to blend with the learning focus by the teachers involved.

Both panels analyzed the difference that occurred between teachers and in-school administrators on item 7, *trust and positive communication exists between the supervisor and the teacher*, and item 16, *teachers develop a plan for professional growth that is related to improving student learning and establishes them as life long learners,* as qualities of effective instructional supervision. The in-school administrator panel acknowledged that "Not all teachers trust in-school administrators as much as their in-school administrators think they do." This phenomenon could have been based on two things: position, and the experiences of those involved. The in-school administrators discussed the differences of their position in terms of roles and responsibilities compared to the teachers. There was additional discussion regarding teachers bringing with them the experiences they had with previous in-school administrators and that any negative experiences had a direct influence on current and future interactions. One in-school administrator even stated, "When you think of the teacher group, large and diverse as it is, there are going to be those in the group that are less trusting simply because they are perhaps marginal in their skills or feel threatened by the success of other teachers."

Panellists on the teacher panel shared how in-school administrators were required to supervise and therefore were responsible to do it. The panel consisting of teachers pointed out that if the in-school administrator did not trust the teacher they were supervising, the task was made more difficult for the teacher involved. Teachers may not have felt that they needed to engage in the supervision process as much, as one panellist remarked "I am going to be

supervised whether I trust you or not". In effect the process would continue because it had to be done as per the expectation within the school division.

Discussion

Teachers and in-school administrators did not differ greatly in their perspectives on effective instructional supervision. The consistency in their responses indicated an awareness of the qualities of effective instructional supervision within the school division. The responses collected from the survey indicated agreement among all respondents that the qualities from the literature lead to effective instructional supervision. Qualities that dealt with the environment in which teachers and in-school administrators work and the atmosphere or tone taken during the process had a higher mean. The literature indicated (Nolan & Hoover, 2005) an environment that addresses trust, positive communication, continuous reflection and inquiry, conferencing skills and fosters a climate that values community, collaboration, and continuous growth were important in supervision practices.

The traditional instructional supervision process that consisted of the supervisor being more of an expert regarding the work of the teachers has had an impact on current practices. Most teachers received the bulk of their supervision visits in the first few years of being in the profession. Numerous experienced teachers, in fact, may not have had any supervision experiences since that time. Teachers may also be misinformed by interchanging instructional supervision with evaluation, where a performance judgement was made. Diaz-Maggioli (2004) found that many supervisory practices included evaluation whether implicitly or explicitly. In traditional methods of instructional supervision, teachers tended to believe that a supervisor in a

classroom indicated that they were being evaluated rather than receiving support for growth (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003).

Rather than improving teaching and learning, traditional methods of instructional supervision focused on feedback from a supervisor that had qualities of the classroom environment as the priority. The model was based more on compliance than building capacity (Aseltine et al., 2006), resulting in resentfulness and caution (Gullat & Ballard, 1998; Townsend, 1987). The panel affirmed the view that the previous experiences of the teacher does influence their perception of the instructional supervision process even if the process had changed. The school division in which the study was carried out was no exception. Since the school division had only been in existence since 2006, respondents were relatively new in terms of awareness and experience of the division policy and procedures regarding professional growth, supervision, and evaluation.

One of the items in which respondents indicated a lower level of agreement was in connecting the work of teachers with the goals of the school improvement plan. Aseltine et al. (2006) linked the work of teachers with the goals of the school improvement plan within the Performance-Based Supervision and Evaluation plan. The interpretation panels discussed how the school goals still had not been connected, or made relevant, to the work of individual teachers. At the same time, the panels suggested that in-school administrators may not be fully aware of all the activities teachers do in the classroom that meet the goals in the school improvement plan.

The survey and the interpretation panels highlighted the importance of the relationship between the teacher being supervised and the supervisor. Trust and positive communication is

necessary in order for the process to be meaningful and productive. Nolan and Hoover (2005) noted that essential to supervision are the skills of building trust and positive communication. A climate that provides for collaboration and that values continuous growth is foundational to fostering relationships where trust and communication can occur. According to Renihan (2004) any supervisory activity must include policy directed collaboration with the assumption that the teachers involved are intelligent, professional, and committed to enhancing their instructional performance.

Analysis: Qualities of Professional Learning Communities Impacting Instructional Supervision

In the final section of the survey respondents were asked to consider how critical qualities of successful professional learning communities are related to effective instructional supervision. The results from the survey attempted to address the research question, *What are the criteria of successful professional learning communities based on the literature that are seen to relate to effective supervisory practice?*

Teacher Interpretation Panel

The teacher interpretation panel noticed that from the top five ranked qualities based on the mean, dealt with issues relating to the provision of time as a critical factor. One teacher stated, "Teachers are saying in order for me to be effectively evaluated, I need enough opportunity to improve who I am as a teacher. Time is a huge factor." Time needed to be provided to use the feedback gained through the process and to make any changes in teaching practice and improve student learning. It was emphasized that teachers require time to improve

in order to be effectively supervised and evaluated. The panel agreed with the statement "The time needed for PLCs and the time required for instructional supervision is connected."

The panel spent some time considering item one (ranked eleventh), *teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice*. It was stated that "Reflection is a very personal and private process." A panellist suggested that the experience of survey respondents indicated that instructional supervision is considered a top down process rather than a collaborative one by asking, "Do teachers still see instructional supervision as a top down process rather than a collaborative process? With whom do teachers collaborate with?" Another panellist thought that perhaps "PLCs are more collaborative and supervision is more individualized." A member of the panel shared, "Teachers do emphasize a commitment to change, opportunities to collaborate and for self improvement, and a focus on student learning. Give us the opportunity or time and we can do what we need to do."

Overall, the teacher panel found that the survey results indicated discrepancies in perceptions between teachers and in-school administrators. A panellist suggested, "In-school administrators are saying, 'build it and they will come', while teachers are saying 'commit to it before you build it'." While the results provided evidence that all respondents agreed with the items presented, the panel believed that the perspectives of teachers and in-school administrators need to become more aligned as a panellist stated, "Somehow the perspectives need to come together for instructional supervision and PLCs to be successful and effective."

In-School Administrators Panel

The interpretation panel compared the data from the final section of the survey to results from previous sections of the survey. After looking at the compared data, a panellist wondered

"Does it mean that once one realizes that someone is getting supervised then there is more focus on the individual activity and a desire to only be responsible for oneself?" Another asked, "How much of a connection really exists between what we believe and what we end up doing?"

In terms of the opportunity to utilize professional learning communities for supporting teachers, the panel discussed how professional learning communities are contrived in small schools. In a small school, a group of teachers with different responsibilities develop assessments and monitor student learning, however the focus is not necessarily connected to the provincial curriculum but to the instructional approaches used in the classroom. The reason was put forward that the small staff had many curricula to cover. It was suggested that larger schools are able to provide more common practice when there can be a team that is connected by similar teaching assignments and focused on a particular curriculum.

In-school administrators felt the data indicated that teachers did not feel their time was well utilized unless it focused on activities that support students. According to the panel, if teachers were given the choice between reflecting in a collaborative manner to enhance professional growth or collaborating to develop units to teach students, teachers would choose the development of units. The panel determined that teachers were indicating that supervision should be meaningful to the individual involved and not just simply a process that is made or expected. The panel wondered how much of a connection really existed between professional learning communities and instructional supervision when there may have been a gap between what the school division had hoped to implement, and what was actually occurring in the work of professional learning communities and professional growth, supervision and evaluation.

Panel Comparison

Both interpretation panels came to the same conclusion that there needed to be time and commitment provided for professional learning communities and instructional supervision to occur. There was general agreement that there needs to be a commitment to initiate change, to provide opportunities to collaborate, to promote self improvement and to focus on student learning. If the time or opportunity were available in an appropriate amount then teachers and in-school administrators could do what was required to support both processes.

In terms of a possible connection between professional learning communities and instructional supervision, the teacher panel did consider that perhaps the processes of professional learning communities and instructional supervision were not necessarily connected. Items that were ranked higher, according to mean scores, by all respondents were qualities that were not specific to professional learning communities alone, but could be found in other activities within the school and school division, as one panellist wondered, "Items rated highly are general and not specific qualities of PLCs. The nuts and bolts of PLCs may not be connected to instructional supervision." The many types of collaboration that existed within the school division may have had an affect on how respondents considered their responses when completing the survey. One teacher panellist suggested that "Collaboration is important, but it is not necessary in reflecting on professional practice", while another shared that "Reflection is a very personal and private process." The panel suggested teacher survey respondents were unable to see a connection between the process of working collaboratively and instructional supervision perhaps due to what one panellist stated, "There is not a firm understanding of the theoretical basis of the PLCs."

The in-school administrator panel felt that there was a connection between professional learning communities and instructional supervision however panellists acknowledged that teachers may not consider professional learning communities as the vehicle to effective instructional supervision. One administrator commented, "They don't see the value of combining them. Why don't they?" The panel felt some teachers did not necessarily need a collaborative process to identify the critical items required in instructional practice. As well, teachers did not see themselves as requiring collective support while being supervised. The panel believed in-school administrators realized how important collaboration was for professional reflection and that there should be a connection between the activity of professional learning communities and instructional supervision, however one panellist added, "Do we say identifying critical outcomes is important because DuFour says so?"

The panels took time to examine the results that indicated differences between teachers and in-school administrators on the items, *teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice*, and, *the professional learning community identifies critical outcomes for the subject area being taught*, had a significant difference between how teachers and in-school administrators responded.

In the discussion among the teacher panellists, a teacher suggested that the difference was due to the fact that "Teachers too often see themselves as an isolated island within the school and that they are ultimately responsible whether they sink or swim." The panel indicated that teachers would reflect on their professional activities whether or not a collaborative process was available. The panel also stated that in-school administrators, in carrying out the specific

responsibilities, must engage others in the instructional supervision process, and that they could not do instructional supervision in isolation.

When looking at the data, it was suggested by members of the in-school administrator panel that a reason for the differences may be a result of the position they hold within the school and the school division. The panel felt that "in-school administrators had a greater awareness" of the processes within the school division and had an opportunity to ask questions and interact with division officials about procedures that were being used. In-school administrators mentioned how the shift that was occurring in the school division toward professional learning communities becoming more school-based may eventually increase the possibilities of connecting the work of professional learning communities to instructional supervision. One panellist suggested that a greater level of responsibility may be expected of teachers in school-based professional learning communities,

> Previously, when teachers were assigned division professional learning communities, teachers would often comment on how their particular professional learning community was not working and that it was never their fault. With more school-based professional learning communities directly monitored by their in-school administrators, teachers will be more accountable to the success of the PLC, and to reflect on professional practice and identifying outcomes for learning.

Discussion

The final section of results from the survey as well as the analysis of the interpretation panel were pivotal to the key theme of this study in understanding how professional learning communities could be utilized in instructional supervision. After reviewing the top three ranked

qualities connecting qualities of professional learning communities to instructional supervision themes became clear that both processes: (a) require a collaborative environment,(b) must focus on continuous improvement, and (c) require sufficient time for all the participants involved. Respondents favoured qualities that focused on the activity of the teachers over qualities directly involving student learning.

While the characteristics of a professional learning community lead to improved teaching and learning (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006), the interpretation panel questioned whether the school division had reached a point where evidence of student learning was in fact being utilized as part of instructional supervision. From the discussions at the interpretation panels it is possible that teachers connected instructional supervision to performance evaluations and as a result were unlikely to support a process that would base their employment on the performance of students. If the common understanding were that professional learning communities are about collecting evidence about and responding to student learning, then teachers and in-school administrators within the selected school division may not have been aware of how instructional supervision and professional learning communities could support one another. According to Garubo and Rothstein (1998), if teachers were made aware that the instructional supervision process was about supporting their success in the classroom there is a greater likelihood of support by teachers.

Time was a significant issue for discussion. The panels brought up this necessary resource a number of times through the review of survey data. Teachers require time to improve in order to be effectively supervised and evaluated is supported by Guskey's (2003) findings that sufficient time was a necessary characteristic of any professional development activity. Teachers

need feedback and comparative information to help them assess and enhance their effectiveness (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; McLaughin & Talbert, 2006). The professional learning community through its collaborative nature provides an opportunity for teachers to gather feedback and comparative information. In this respect, Pankake and Moller (2003) indicated that shared leadership promotes a variety of interactions and relationships that build capacity for change.

From the discussion by the interpretation panels it was clear that the participants in the school division were moving from a practice where professional learning communities were division wide to one being based on personal professional need supported at the school level. In particular, the dialogue around instructional supervision highlighted a process that was still perceived as a top down approach to professional growth even thought the practice had been with input from teachers and in-school administrators through the local association. The change in role of the supervisor from judge to colleague is what is necessary to improve the relevance of supervision according to Starratt (1997). Andrews and Lewis (2002) stated that teachers will develop a new image of themselves through developing relationships with administrative leaders who work in parallel with teachers, changing the role of the principal to a strategic leader.

The responses from the interpretation panels indicate that while in-school administrators have had access to the theoretical background for the policy and procedures for professional learning communities and instructional supervision, teachers have not, at least to the same extent. The discussion of the interpretation panels were evidence that there appeared to exist two levels of knowledge and corresponding support as a result of in-school administrators having a more 'system wide' view than teachers. DuFour, Eaker and DuFour (2005) stress that if the school division were to completely utilize professional learning communities all policies, procedures

and even the educators themselves must make the necessary changes. It is a large and erroneous assumption to expect that when teachers talk about "improved student learning" that everyone is talking about the same thing (Servage, 2006/2007).

The personal nature of supervision and the time required to do it effectively often meant that individuals had a desire to retain as much control as possible of their own actions and involvement within the supervision process. The panel suggested how personal the process of reflection was, as Mezirow and Associates (1990) identified, the opportunity to reflect has the potential for profoundly changing the way teachers make sense of their world, other people and themselves. The opportunity for reflection not only maximizes learning but it improves teaching (Martin-Kniep, 2004). While teachers participating in the panel acknowledged the strength of collaborative processes in supporting professional growth, supported by Rettig's (1999) suggestion that teachers be given the opportunity to provide feedback to each other, when it came to accountability and responsibility the teachers preferred to rely on individual strengths. The literature indicated that when teachers are aware of their own teaching practice, teachers could determine the need for a change (Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998).

Additional Considerations Offered By The Interpretation Panels

The teacher interpretation panel felt that teachers do believe that they are responsible for and accountable for student learning. The panel also felt that time for any professional development activity is required as one panellist stated, "Both administrators and teachers see the importance of this. Both PLCs and instructional supervision requires time." The panellists also agreed that overall, teachers prefer a collaborative setting in which to work and that teachers would appreciate more input into how collaboration takes place within the school division. The

data also indicated that there is a real difference in perspectives between teachers and in-school administrators in the areas of professional learning communities and instructional supervision.

In-school administrators, on the interpretation panel, felt that overall in-school administrators focussed on school improvement while teachers focussed on teaching and classroom activities. One panellist described it as "Administrators are more idealistic. They appreciate the bigger picture and involvement." The panel suggested that personal improvement was more important than collective improvement for teachers. Another panellist stated, "When teachers are asked to consider improvement they ask, 'Am I not doing enough?'" The panel of in-school administrators suggested that there are "Two worlds or different lenses" between teachers and in-school administrators in how they perceive the procedures within the school and the division, as one panellist shared, "Administrators feel that they have more control over their environment. They make choices that impact the wellness of the entire teaching staff."

Teachers on the interpretation panel suggested that there needs to be more focused work on instructional supervision for teachers and in-school administrators. "The philosophical difference between teachers and in-school administrators as managers that currently exists needs to be addressed" stressed one teacher. A panellist observed that the school division seeks feedback from in-school administrators prior to implementation of policies and practices and asked "Do we do this for teachers?" Another panellist agreed, stating "Teachers need time to participate and contribute in the process of development." The panel suggested the continuation of teacher involvement at the committee level but that a pilot process be considered with teachers prior to any official implementation. Finally, the panel felt that the school division had indirectly shown a connection between professional learning communities and instructional supervision

and student learning. One panellist advocated that student learning "needs to be a part of the way we are evaluated and not only teachers and administrators. The entire system needs to be held accountable to these ideals."

It was also emphasized by the interpretation panels that everyone within the school division needed to be exposed to the theoretical material behind all division activities to increase the likelihood of individuals aspiring to the ideals shared. The in-school administrator panel felt that teachers are very busy with their current duties. One panellist stated that "The treadmill for teachers is never ending. Time is so important. New initiatives needed to be an 'instead of' rather and an 'add on'. Another panellist shared the need for in-school administrators to filter information from the division for teachers, as a result. In-school administrators considered that an increase in time is needed to support individuals in developing relationships through collaboration. A panellist asked, "The current education structure doesn't allow teachers to collaborate easily with colleagues. The focus is on 'your' timetable, 'your' year plan, or your' lesson plan. How do we change so that it is more collaborative in nature?" The panel stressed that the professional learning communities in existence within the school division needed to be based on one model and that all participants received the same theory and background necessary to ensure success. However a contrary position was stated by one panellist adding, "The need for everyone to be the same can create fear."

The interpretation panels completed their analysis by considering anything that was not clear in the data collected. Members of the panels were curious as to what drove the differences in perspectives between in-school administrators and teachers. One in-school administrator described the difference as "Shocking!" For the most part, the teachers on the panel considered

teachers as professionals and part of a collaborative team but as one panellist felt "In-school administrators considered teachers as someone to be managed." Teacher panellists also felt that there was a lack of understanding of the role that the local teachers association and the provincial teachers' organization played in supporting teachers in the supervision process. Even though there had been teacher input into professional learning communities, professional growth, supervision and evaluation within the division, the panel felt that not all teachers were aware of this input. The panel also determined that if professional learning communities and instructional supervision were indeed designed to focus on student learning then as one panellist asked, "Should there be a closely aligned focus between instructional supervision and PLCs? They should complement each other. Time and effort needs to be placed into these processes supporting one another." The teacher panel felt that the study supported the need for teacher involvement in the processes. As one panellist shared, "The shift in strengthening the division PLCs is a recognition of that. In supervision there has been involvement of a committee but teachers as a whole don't recognize any involvement. When the supervision process is fully developed, will it continue to be perceived to be a top down process? Or will it create ownership by the teachers?"

The in-school administrator panel believed that the previous instructional supervision process and professional learning communities model used in the school division was something that happened to staff from the top down. New initiatives in the school division were providing staff with an opportunity to enhance these experiences and move to a more collaborative process that empowered staff. Some in-school administrators on the panel felt that ultimately "Teachers continue to view themselves as independent in their classrooms and in essence creating an environment of isolation", while in-school administrators were" Moving more quickly towards

utilizing a collaborative reflective practice." A panellist offered that "Teachers perceive that nothing is ever finished. Others, such as draftsman or engineers, create a product and it is done. Teachers don't see that and as a result the work sometimes feels daunting."

Summary of Key Findings

Concluding the study, I will address my key findings. The interpretation panels suggested that in-school administrators were focused on the work of the school as a whole, had a greater awareness of school division expectations and were more idealistic in their perspectives of professional learning communities and instructional supervision. *Teachers and in-school administrators had a different perspective* in regard to how they perceived the school, school division and the activities within the school division. In-school administrators felt that they had more control over their environment and that their choices impacted the wellness of the teaching staff. Teachers believed they were more directly responsible and accountable for student learning.

All panellists agreed that a *sufficient amount of time* is required for professional learning communities and instructional supervision. Throughout the interpretation panel discussions and in the results from the survey, time was an important factor that was considered necessary. Time was connected to the ability to utilize the other listed qualities provided and a lack of time was also considered to be a significant obstacle to the success and effectiveness of professional learning communities and instructional supervision.

Both groups believed a *common understanding* of the processes of professional learning communities and instructional supervision was considered a necessity. When it came to professional learning communities panellists and survey participants had experiences from the

former school divisions as well as within the current school division. The interpretation panel indicated that the varying experiences were an obstacle to success. Servage (2006/2007) indicated that value judgements can become a source of disagreement and tension among the team in professional learning communities. The impact of restructuring of the school division was significant. It brought the need for a greater effort to communicate and to develop common practices and understandings. The fact that the former school divisions had practices that were common in name but different in practice increased the difficulties of developing a new and common culture.

The initial experience of professional learning communities played a role in how participants were approaching the work. As instructional supervision moved from a clinical model to a more collaborative one, the previous experiences will continue to influence teachers and in-school administrators. An instructional supervision process that is based on a collaborative model that supports the professional growth of teachers cannot be fully effective as long as teachers continue to retain the experiences of a traditional supervision process as the basis for supervision or, as demonstrated in the interpretation panel, teachers continue to consider characteristics of an evaluation process as those of instructional supervision. In order to move forward with practices that are based on best practice, literature or research, a common knowledge base must be shared by all participants.

Teachers preferred a *collaborative setting*, and appreciated *input into collaborative* processes set up to assist their work. The results of the survey and the analysis of the interpretation panel supported the fact that collaboration is an important factor in how teachers work. The degree of collaboration depends on what is required. The panels suggested that

teachers also appreciate independence and self direction when it comes to instructional supervision. The interpretation panels indicated a discourse from teachers in the input to the processes and that in many respects both professional learning communities and instructional supervision were considered to be hierarchical. Not all teachers felt empowered or engaged as equal participants.

In Chapter 2, I presented a conceptual framework that utilized Peine's (2007) indicators of professional growth and here reintroduce Figure 2.1. The elements are:

1. Acquisition of new knowledge and/or skills.

2. Use of the new knowledge and/or skills when and where appropriate.

3. Improvement of students achievement.

4. Enhanced reflective practice; and
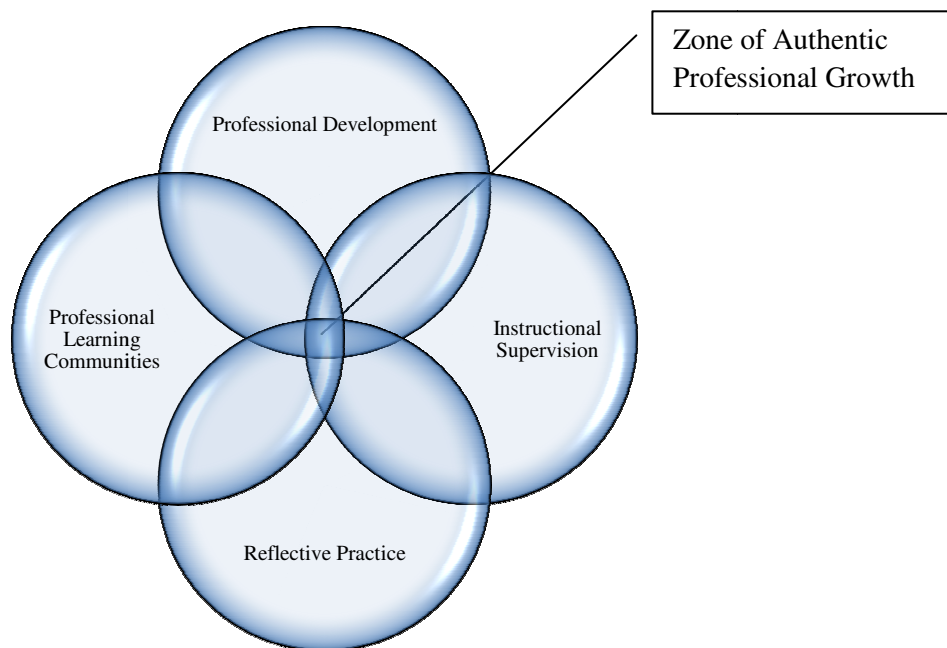
5. Contributes to the learning community.

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework: enhancing teacher supervision through professional learning communities as catalysts for authentic professional growth

When considering the activities of professional learning communities, instructional supervision, professional development, and reflection, a zone of authentic professional growth occurs where these activities overlap and support each other. The zone must provide the opportunity for the teacher to acquire new knowledge and skills, to support teachers in using the new knowledge and/or skills when and where appropriate, to improve student learning, to use reflective practice, and to contribute to the learning community as a whole. Based on the survey results and the dialogue of the interpretation panels, the study indicated that it is possible to create a zone of authentic professional growth by connecting the activities of professional learning communities and instructional supervision. In order for this to occur the results of this study suggest that eight preconditions are necessary:

1. There is a commitment to continuous improvement,

2. Teachers have the ability to make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students,

3. There is a provision of adequate time,

4. There is an opportunity for collaboration with colleagues inside and outside the school,

5. Teachers participate in on-going self-assessment of their instructional practices,

6. There is a focus on instruction and student learning specific to the settings in which they teach,

7. Evidence of student learning is collected through the development of assessment tools, and

8. There is an examination of the evidence about the relationship between instructional practice and student learning.

Members of a professional learning community that actively meet the above conditions of the zone increase their chances of achieving professional growth. At the same time, members can also be assured that they are also supporting instructional supervision practices.

Implications

The final section of this chapter deals with the question, *how can the criteria be implemented to support effective supervisory practice?* The findings of the study will be used to consider implications of the key findings of this study for policy, practice, theory, and research. These implications will provide the necessary considerations to create professional learning communities that can be utilized to promote effective instructional supervision.

Implications for Policy

In order for the conceptual framework of the study to be realized, a school division needs to consider the conditions that must be met in the presented zone of authentic professional growth.

The study provided a need for any policy development to include participation by all partners involved. There needs to be active participation by teachers and in-school administrators in what requires a sharing of knowledge and input in the planning of division activities. Ownership and shared leadership are vital to creating an environment that can embrace the collaborative culture necessary for successful professional learning communities and effective instructional supervision. Information about professional learning communities and instructional supervision within the school division needs to be readily available for everyone and needs to be based on an understanding of current education trends in literature and research.

Policy for professional learning communities needs to meet the needs of teachers. The study indicates that professional learning communities can be a powerful professional development activity to support additional professional development activities, reflective practice and instructional supervisory practice. Careful attention needs to be paid in creating an environment or zone in which authentic professional growth can occur. The policy needs to provide the structure and foundation in which teachers, as professionals, can build their professional growth. This requires a policy that is also general and flexible enough to accommodate the various activities that teachers wish to engage in.

While considering policy for instructional supervision, the study suggests that many of the qualities of effective instructional supervision can be met in the activities of professional learning communities that use the recommended conditions of the study. If this integration is assumed, any policy would need to indicate this connection. Additional activities that are required, such as the professional growth plan requirements within the school division studied, would need to be included in the policy.

Within the school division studied, the move toward the instructional supervisor being a collaborative guide and facilitator was not yet fully realized. The interpretation panels brought out the perceived differences between teachers and in-school administrators and a lack of understanding by the principles of a collaborative instructional supervisory practice. The previous experiences of teachers continue to influence the current perspective of instructional supervision. The school division had a new policy reflecting the collaborative nature but the implementation of the policy, proved by the study, indicated that the implementation was still

ongoing.   The study indicates that ongoing education and training is required for those involved

in the supervision process, especially to support the movement of staff in and out of the division.

Implications for Practice

The study indicated that the element of time was a vital or critical aspect in supporting

professional learning communities and instructional supervision. The ability of a school division

to manage time effectively to provide sufficient resources for both professional learning

communities and instructional supervision is important if there is going to be authentic

professional growth of professional staff. The study highlighted that teachers and in-school

administrators are increasingly aware of the limits of their time and how some are reluctant to

participate in activities that are not sustainable. Time is a significant resource in a school division

and requires a balancing of priorities. If there is an effort to implement a professional learning

community model with adequate resources that support the identified criteria from the study,

then school divisions can be confident that the resources not only impact positively on student

learning but provide professional growth and learning opportunities for teachers to enhance their

practice and understanding.

Professional learning communities in the school division being studied were being

adjusted to reflect the needs of the school division and teachers. The study highlighted the

difficulties in pursuing a common direction and culture especially in a relatively new school

division. The restructuring of the school division had a significant impact on the division's

ability to implement common practise and understandings of professional learning communities

and instructional supervision. The experiences in the former school divisions were a part of those

original cultures and the shift to the new school division did not remove the impact or influence

of these cultures. In pursuing any new initiative within the school division attention must be made to ensure that all those involved have access to the same information, regardless of the position held, and that it is easily accessible. The differences in perceptions between teachers and in-school administrators highlighted in the study, provides a case for open and accessible communication, which may build trust and relationships between the two groups as Taylor (2002) suggested regarding the politics of shaping the culture of learning communities. Taylor stated that being open and making sure everyone has the same information helps to build trust.

The many activities of the school division can be re-examined through the lens of the study. If the school division examined the activities that promote professional growth there may be an opportunity to integrate, merge or even eliminate related activities. By refocusing the available energy and resources into a few key activities, such as professional learning communities as presented in this study, a more efficient use the resources can be achieved.

Implications for Theory

The findings of the study indicate that the theoretical base for professional learning communities and instructional supervision are compatible to supporting the professional growth of teachers. The survey and the interpretation panel provided affirmation for all items presented based on relevant literature. Respondents in the school division studied had a general awareness of both processes and the attributes related to them. The previous experience of the respondents played a large role in their perceptions of the study.

The study indicates that the collaborative theory behind effective instructional supervision has not yet reached a common level of understanding among those in the school division. As educators begin to utilize literature and research in their education practices on a

more frequent basis, a transformation will likely occur in how theory is used. Most significantly, it would seem that new theories will no longer be isolated to educator training or to the administrators of a school system. Teachers will need to utilize theory to support best practice as the need for greater accountability among schools in supporting student learning becomes more apparent. The conceptual framework presented in the study provides an opportunity to integrate theory and research into the activities of the school division.

Implications for Research

As school systems continue to balance the limited resources of time, finances, and personnel, connections will need to be made between activities and the goals of the system in order to prioritize where the resources should be placed. Activities which can support more than one goal, such as professional learning communities, need to be developed and studied further in connection to other activities that may share similar goals. Opportunities to connect such activities with developing research and literature provides the necessary knowledge base and confirmation that these connections can be made and are sustained.

The findings of this study raised additional research questions such as:

1. How can the conceptualization of instructional supervision and evaluation be supported?

2. What are the time constraints and how do systems adapt regarding professional learning communities and instructional supervision?

3. It might be worthwhile to do a comparative study with other individuals within the same school system or with another school system.

4.   What other variables promote the different perceptions by in-school administrators and teachers in considering the effectiveness of professional learning communities and instructional supervision?

5.   What supports are required in a rural school system to support successful professional learning communities and effective instructional supervision?

6.   What was the impact of restructuring on school divisions, on activities within the school division, and on staff.

7.   How does professional autonomy of teachers impact collaborative practices?

The above list of additional research questions is not exhaustive. This list establishes that the topic studied continues to be a rich area for future study and for new possibilities in research.

Reflections of the Researcher and Concluding Comments

The study provided for me an opportunity to support educational practices as they relate to professional learning communities and instructional supervision. The experience also provided me with an opportunity for professional growth. As presented, reflective practice is a component of professional growth.

The use of mixed methods research was an appropriate choice. As a beginning researcher, I found that the process of collecting data from the survey and then using an interpretation panel to enrich the analysis was supportive to building my research skills. I believe that mixed methods does provide the researcher with the ability to use the best strategies in completing a study. The use of the interpretation panel was an excellent source of feedback to the study as well and a valuable vehicle to gain an analysis of the survey data by participants of the survey. Members of the panel were interested in the study and supportive in reaching an

analysis that was accurate. Some members suggested that the survey could be improved by not attaching two qualities into one item to consider. Other members suggested that this occasional combination forced a reflective response. All panellists considered the interpretation panel was an engaging process. As an observer to the discussion I found the interpretation panels provided an intense dialogue in the sense that the panellists were very focused on the topic being studied and that the discussion naturally progressed with little facilitation from me. The interpretation panel experience may be enhanced when the panellists have a greater knowledge of research methods and statistical analysis. However such a requirement may limit the number of individuals who could participate in the interpretation panel. In the context of this particular study, not all panellists had experience with statistical analysis or research methodology. I found the information shared with the panellists prior to the discussion to be sufficient for meaningful discussion.

As a researcher, I found it was a positive experience to sit and observe a discussion among the panellists about the data and the study. The role of the facilitator/researcher in interpretation panels is a complicated process of moving the study forward without jeopardizing the analysis being offered by the panellists. In this particular study the panels required little intervention from me in moving the discussion through the data. The discussions could have continued longer than the time I provided, which is a consideration I would have in using interpretation panels in the future. In terms of data collection in the panel, I would want to use a recording device that could be used to transcribe the conversation to enhance the presentation of this analytical data.

The study provided the criteria necessary within professional learning communities that could support effective instructional supervision as professional development activities utilized reflective practices in supporting professional growth. When the criteria are met, a zone of authentic professional growth is created.

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Appendix A:

Letter to School Division

Box _
_, SK
_
November 2008

_____, Superintendent of Schools and Learning
_____, *Coordinator of Schools and Learning Assessment, Evaluation & Research*
_
Box _, _, SK, _

Dear _____ & _____,

      In am writing this letter to request your approval to conduct a research study in the _. I am enrolled in the Master's (thesis) degree program in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan.

      My thesis is entitled "The Relationship of Instructional Supervision and Professional Learning Communities as Catalysts for Authentic Professional Growth: the study of one school division."

      The subjects of the study will be approximately 140 in-school administrators and classroom teachers from several schools in your school division. The participation of these individuals would be on a voluntary basis and I can assure you that their responses would be treated as confidential and anonymous. The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has approved the procedures and guidelines for this study.

      This study will compromise a survey that will be administered to the in-school administrators and the classroom teachers in the selected schools. The survey will be followed by two interpretation panels. One panel will consist of 5 classroom teachers and the other panel will consist of 5 in-school administrators. The purpose of the panel will be to interpret the data collected from the survey. I will be the facilitator for the panels.

      If you have any questions or concerns with respect to this study, I can be reached at the following numbers: _(work office); _ (home); _ (email at work)
      For further information, please feel free to contact my thesis advisor, Dr. Patrick Renihan at his office number, _.

      Thank you for considering my request for this educational study. I look forward to hearing from you.

      Sincerely,

      Scott Burant

Appendix B:

Cover Letter For Survey

Cover Letter for Survey

Dear Colleague,

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "The Relationship of Supervision and Professional Learning Communities as Catalysts for Authentic Professional Growth: the study of one school division. Your participation is strictly voluntary. By completing and returning the attached survey it is implied that you consent to participate in this study.

The study is a partial fulfillment of the requirements of my Master of Educational Administration degree at the University of Saskatchewan. By completing the attached survey, you will assist me in determining the connection between instructional supervision and professional learning communities.

The attached survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. To ensure anonymity, please do not put your name or the name of your school on the document. The data collected will be reported in an aggregate form so that it will not be possible to identify individuals. When you have completed the survey please place the document into the enclosed envelope and place the envelope into the large envelope marked "Surveys" that is located in your school office.

The results of the survey will be presented to two interpretation panels to assist in the interpretation of the data. The interpretation panels will consist of individuals, such as you, who have completed the survey. Attached is a consent form that I invite you to read. If you consent to participating in the interpretation panel please complete the consent form and place it into the large envelope marked "Consent Forms" in your school office. Please do not include the consent form in the envelope with your completed survey.

The data collected from this survey may be presented at a conference or in book form. The data will be securely stored and retained by the graduate researcher for a minimum of five years with Dr. Patrick Renihan, Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines.

The research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Saskatchewan's Behavioural Research Ethics Board on February 2, 2009. You may call the Research Ethics Office collect at (306) 966-2084, collect calls are welcome.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me at _.

Sincerely,

Scott Burant,
Master's Student, Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan.

Appendix C:

Consent Form for Interpretation Panel

Consent Form for Interpretation Panel
Professional Learning Communities and Instructional Supervision

You have been invited to complete a survey for my research project entitled "The Relationship of Supervision and Professional Learning Communities as Catalysts for Authentic Professional Growth: the study of one school division. I invite you now to participate in the next phase of the study consisting of an interpretation panel.

Researcher:
Scott Burant, Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, contact number: _

Research Supervisor:
Dr. Patrick Renihan, Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan contact number: _

Purpose and Procedure:
This study focuses on the perceptions of one school division regarding the relationship of professional learning communities and instructional supervision as catalysts for authentic professional growth. Questionnaire research will be used to gather the perceptions of teacher in relation to the criteria present in successful professional learning communities and in effective instructional supervision. An interpretation panel, a type of focus group, will be utilized to assist me in interpreting the data collected from the questionnaire.
The study will specifically address the following research questions.

1. What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?
2. What is the level of agreement, by in-school administrators, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?
3. What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of successful professional learning communities, based on literature, are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?
4. What is the level of agreement, by in-school administrators, that the qualities of successful professional learning communities, based on literature, are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?
5. What are the criteria of successful professional learning communities based on the literature that are seen to relate to effective supervisory practice?

The interpretation panel will analyze and interpret the data collected from the survey already distributed. The panel will look at information collected from the summary, including the means and standard deviation for each question, results of each question categorized by years of experience and role in the school of survey participants, and top responses for each section in the survey. The panel will be asked for what resonates with them from the information presented, and to discuss possible reasons for the results. The panel will meet for approximately two hours with a supper provided. From all the consent forms received, the researcher will be selecting five teachers and five in-school administrators to participate. Only the selected panel members will be notified of their participation.

The results will be shared with the participating school division as required to conduct the research. Furthermore, the results may be published, and/or presented at seminars and/or conferences. Although I

may report direct quotations from the interpretation panel, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information will be removed from the report.

Confidentiality:
The researcher will undertake to safeguard the confidentiality of the discussion held by the panel, but cannot guarantee that other members of the group will do so. Please respect the confidentiality of the other members of the group by not disclosing the contents of this discussion outside the panel, and be aware that others may not respect your confidentiality. The discussion held by the interpretation panel will not be tape recorded. Highlights, summaries, and key statements will be recorded in writing by the researcher. The comments of individual panellists may be identified by their fellow panellists in the final documentation.

Right to Withdraw:
Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from your involvement. The information shared will be held in strict confidence. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort.

Questions:
If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher at the number provided if you have other questions. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on February 2, 2009. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084), collect calls are welcome.

Consent to Participate:
I have read and understood the description provided. I consent to participate in the interpretation panel, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

_____   _____
(Name of Participant)   (Date)

_____   _____
(Signature of Participant)   (Signature of Researcher)

_____
(School)

Appendix D:

Professional Learning Communities and Instructional Supervision Survey

Professional Learning Communities and Instructional Supervision Survey

Thank you for participating in this study. Please complete the survey below. Upon completion please place the survey into the envelope. Return the envelope to your office.

Part A: Demographic Information
Place an "X" in the appropriate box for each of the following items.

1.	What is the primary responsibility of your job?
	☐ classroom teacher
	Please indicate grade and/or subject_____
	☐ in-school administrator
	☐ teacher librarian
	☐ special education resource teacher
2.	Number of years of experience in the teaching profession?
	☐ 0-5 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 26-30
	☐ 6-10 ☐ 21-25 ☐ 30+
	☐ 11-15

Part B "Professional Learning Communities":
When considering the following aspects of a **successful professional learning community** please use the following scale when responding (circle the number that best describes your reaction to each statement)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

In successful professional learning communities:	Please rate your level of agreement with each statement					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
18. Teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Teachers examine evidence about the relationship between instructional practice, and student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. The focus is based on gathering evidence of student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6

22. The professional learning community identifies critical outcomes for the subject area being taught.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. The professional learning community develops assessment tools to collect evidence of student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. The professional learning community utilizes collective inquiry into best practice.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. There is a commitment by the professional learning community members to their own continuous improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. Teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. Teachers use assessment results to gauge their own effectiveness in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. Teachers focus on instruction and student learning specific to the settings in which they teach.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. The work of a professional learning community is sustained and continuous.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. There is an opportunity for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. There is an opportunity to reflect on teachers' influence about what and how they learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. Help teachers develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. Time is provided for professional learning communities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. There is a framework for working effectively within a collaborative structure.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. Other:	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. Other:	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. Other:	1	2	3	4	5	6

Part C "Instructional Supervision":

When considering the following aspects of **effective instructional supervision** please use the following scale when responding (circle the number that best describes your reaction to each statement)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

In effective instructional supervision:	Please rate your level of agreement with each statement					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The educational experiences and learning of all students is enhanced.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. The professional growth of teachers is promoted.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. The increasing expectation of accountability is addressed.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Data-based decision making by the teacher being supervised is used.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. The process of teachers' work rather than its outcome is a focus.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. The growth of the teacher being supervised is supported.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Trust and positive communication exists between the supervisor and the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. There is Encouragement for continuous reflection and inquiry into teaching by the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. The supervisor collects systematic data for the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. The interpretation and use of the data occurs in a collaborative nature between the supervisor and the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. A school wide climate that values community, collaboration and continuous growth is fostered.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Teachers use student performance as evidence to demonstrate that learning has taken place.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. There is emphasis on setting meaningful and realistic professional goals measured in terms of improved student performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6

14. Teachers are encouraged to analyze, individually and collectively, student work and use this data to address learning needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Teachers are encouraged to design focused interventions to strengthen and enhance student learning in targeted areas.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Teachers develop a plan for professional growth that is related to improving student learning and establishes them as life long learners.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. The work of the teacher, supervisor and additional resources is brought together through collaboration and commitment.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. the work of teachers is linked with the goals of the school improvement plan	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Other:	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Other:	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Other:	1	2	3	4	5	6

Part D "Identifying Critical Qualities":

In this section you will now consider the qualities in Part B "successful professional learning communities" and consider how critical each quality is to effective instructional supervision.

Please use the following scale when determining the degree of criticalness (circle the number that best describes your reaction to each statement).

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not Critical					Very Critical

How critical is each quality to effective instructional supervision?	Please rate your degree of criticalness for each statement					
	Not Critical					Very Critical
1. Teachers work collaboratively to reflect on their professional practice.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Teachers examine evidence about the relationship between instructional practice, and student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6

3. Teachers make the necessary changes to improve teaching and learning for their students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. The focus is based on gathering evidence of student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Critical outcomes are identified for the subject area being taught.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Assessment tools are developed to collect evidence of student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Collective inquiry into best practice is utilized by teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. There is a commitment by teachers to their own continuous improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Teachers have an opportunity for on-going self-assessment of their own instructional practices.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Teachers use assessment results to gauge their own effectiveness in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Teachers focus on instruction and student learning specific to the settings in which they teach.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. The work is sustained and continuous.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. There is an opportunity for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. There is an opportunity to reflect on teachers' influence about what and how they learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Help teachers develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Time is provided for professional learning communities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. There is a framework for working effectively within a collaborative structure.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Other:	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Other:	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Other:	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please place the completed survey into the large envelope marked "Surveys" that is located in your school office.

Thank you for your assistance in the study.

You are invited to participate in the next phase of this study consisting of an interpretation panel. Please read and complete the attached consent form and place it in the large envelope marked "Consent Forms" that is located in your school office.

Appendix E:

Application for Research Protocol

**Application for Approval of Research Protocol
To
University of Saskatchewan**

Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research

1.   **Name of Researcher and Related Department**

Name of Researcher:
Scott Burant
Master's Student
Department of Educational Administration

Graduate Supervisor:
Dr. Patrick Renihan
Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan

1b.
Phase I: Anticipated start date of the research study is December 2008
Phase II: Expected completion date of the study is April 2009

2.   **Title of Study**

The Relationship of Supervision and PLC's as Catalysts for Authentic Professional
Growth: the study of one school division

3.   **Abstract**

       In the era of greater accountability in education there should be an attempt by
school divisions to support authentic professional growth for teachers. The
enhancement of educational experiences and learning of students is a goal shared by
the process of instructional supervision, and the professional learning communities
model (Nolan & Hoover, 2004; DuFour & DuFour, 2003). There has been
considerable research into instructional supervision and more recently in professional
learning communities. Meanwhile, there is very little in the connection and
implications of one on the other. The purpose of the study is to investigate the links
between professional learning communities and instructional supervisory practice as a
catalyst for authentic professional growth.

       This study focuses on the perceptions of one school division regarding the
relationship of professional learning communities and instructional supervision as
catalysts for authentic professional growth. Questionnaire research will be used to
gather the perceptions of teacher in relation to the criteria present in successful
professional learning communities and in effective instructional supervision. An
interpretation panel, a type of focus group, will be utilized to assist me in interpreting
the data collected from the questionnaire.

The study will specifically address the following research questions.

1. What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?
2. What is the level of agreement, by in-school administrators, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?
3. What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of successful professional learning communities, based on literature, are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?
4. What is the level of agreement by, in-school administrators, that the qualities of successful professional learning communities, based on literature, are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?
5. What are the criteria of successful professional learning communities based on the literature that are seen to relate to effective supervisory practice?

4.   **Funding**

The graduate researcher will fund the project.

5.   **Conflict of Interest**

The graduate has and will continue to serve as local association teacher president to the participants in the study.

In order to ensure that participants do not feel pressured to participate there will be no direct interaction with possible participants from the researcher. The survey cover letter will be the only information presented to each possible participant from the researcher. In contacting the participating schools, the researcher will remind in-school administrators that there is no expectation that teachers must complete the survey. Teachers are invited to participate through the survey documentation only.

The cover letter indicates permission by the school division to conduct research but does not indicate that individuals must participate. Participants will not be contacted by their employer to confirm their participation.

6.   **Participants**

The target population will be approximately 140 teachers from a variety of schools agreed upon by the school division in which the study takes place. All teachers and in-school administrators in the selected schools will be invited to participate.

7.   **Consent**

An application will be made to a rural school division to conduct the study with the teachers and in-school administrators within the school division. A copy of the letter

for the request is attached to this application. A copy of the letter from the school division granting the researcher access is attached.

Each participant will be provided with a cover letter, attached to the survey. The cover letter will include a statement that this particular study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research. The cover letter will also state that, by completing and returning the attached survey, it is implied that they consent to participating in the survey. A copy of the cover letter is attached to this application.

Each participant will receive a consent form to participate in the interpretation panel. The consent form will follow the suggested template by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The consent form provides details such as the purpose of the study and explains the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any time, without penalty. Participants will be informed that individuals and specific schools will remain anonymous in the writing of the research. A copy of the consent form is attached to this application.

8. **methods/procedures**

Surveys will be distributed by the administrative assistant of each school involved in the study and placed in the school mailboxes of all teachers and in-school administrators in a large rural school division. An envelope will be provided with each survey. Upon completion of the survey, envelopes will be deposited in a larger envelope provided by the researcher. The larger envelope will be kept with the administrative assistants in the school. A copy of the survey is attached to the proposal.

Attached to the cover letter and survey will be a consent form to participate in the interpretation panel. Any participant wishing to participate in the panel will be required to complete the consent form. The consent form will be placed into a large envelope in the school office marked "Consent Forms". The participant will be reminded not to include the consent form in the small envelope in which completed surveys go in.

From all the consent forms received, the researcher will be selecting five teachers and five in-school administrators to participate. The researcher will randomly select individuals from the Interpretation Panel consent forms. The selected panel members will be notified of their participation with two possible dates and times for the interpretation panel meeting. If a participant is unable to attend either of the two possible dates then another name will be randomly selected. This process will be repeated until five individuals are able to form the interpretation panel.

The panel will meet for approximately two hours with a supper provided. The interpretation panel will analyze and interpret the data collected from the survey already distributed. The interpretation panel will have access only to the collated data

collected such as means, standard deviation, number of responses per question, summary of years of experience and position in the school in relation to each question of the survey. None of the members of the interpretation panel will be able to identify the survey participants.

9. **storage of data**

All data will be securely stored and retained by the graduate researcher for a minimum of five years with Dr. Patrick Renihan, Department of Educational Administration in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan's guidelines.

10. **Dissemination of results**

The results of this study will be used to complete the requirements for the Degree of Master in Education in the area of Educational Administration and shared with the faculty of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. The results will be shared with the participating school division as required to conduct the research. Furthermore, the results may be published, and/or presented at seminars and/or conferences. The data will be analyzed in such a way that it will not be possible to identify individual participants nor individual schools.

11. **Risk or deception**

There are no risks or deceptions in this study. The purpose of this study will be communicated to the participants at the beginning of the study. Participation in the study is voluntary and anonymity of those who choose to participate in the study is assured through the method of data collection. Participants may withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

12. **Confidentiality**

The participants in the survey will be informed in the survey that their responses will be anonymous. Surveys will be collected in unmarked envelopes. School envelopes will also be unmarked. When surveys are gathered by the researcher, the data collected will not be able to be traced back to the school of origin. There are no other known risks associated with this study.

The participants in the interpretation panel will be informed that their responses will be anonymous in the presentation of the research. The discussion held by the interpretation panel will not be tape recorded. Highlights, summaries, and key statements will be recorded in writing by the researcher. The comments of individual panellists could be identified by their fellow panellists in the final documentation. Panellists will be made aware of this.

13. **Data/transcript release**

Participants in the interpretation panel will be informed that direct quotations from the interpretation will be reported, and that if, at some later point, they have any second thoughts about their responses, they should contact the researcher, who will remove them from the data base.

14.   **Debriefing and feedback**

All participants will be informed about the public access to the finished project at the University of Saskatchewan. A copy will be deposited at the University of Saskatchewan library. A copy of the study will also be provided to the school division. A 1-2 page executive summary of the project will be provided to each of the participants upon request.

15.   **Required Signatures**

Applicant: Scott Burant

_____   Date: _____

M. Ed Candidate
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan

Advisor: Dr. Patrick Renihan

_____   Date: _____

Department Head: Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart

_____   Date: _____

16.   **Required contact information**

Scott Burant
Researcher
_ (home)
_ (work 1); _ (work 2)
Fax: _
Box _, _, SK, _

Dr. Patrick Renihan
Research Supervisor
Department of Educational Administration
College of Education, University of Saskatchewan
_

Fax: _
28 Campus Drive,
Saskatoon, SK, S7N 0X1

Dr. Sheila Carr-Stewart
Graduate Chair and Department Head
Department of Educational Administration
College of Education, University of Saskatchewan

_
Fax: _
28 Campus Drive,
Saskatoon, SK, S7N 0X1

Appendix F:

Survey Analysis: Reliability Tests

Reliability Tests

All Survey Sections

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	89	83.2
	Excluded[a]	18	16.8
	Total	107	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.962	.963	52

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum/Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	4.802	4.281	5.360	1.079	1.252	.063	52

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People		1274.380	88	14.482		
Within People	Between Items	283.850	51	5.566	10.145	.000
	Residual	2462.126	4488	.549		
	Total	2745.976	4539	.605		
Total		4020.356	4627	.869		
Grand Mean=4.80						

Survey Section B

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	100	93.5
	Excluded[a]	7	6.5
	Total	107	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.926	.930	17

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum/Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	4.778	4.300	5.180	.880	1.205	.061	17
Item Variances	.919	.695	1.375	.680	1.979	.053	17

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People		708.186	99	7.153		
Within People	Between Items	98.111	16	6.132	11.595	.000
	Residual	837.654	1584	.529		
	Total	935.765	1600	.585		
Total		1643.951	1699	.968		
Grand Mean=4.78						

Survey Section C

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	95	88.8
	Excluded[a]	12	11.2
	Total	107	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.933	.933	18

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum/Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	4.670	4.326	4.995	.668	1.155	.036	18
Item Variances	.844	.615	1.133	.518	1.843	.019	18

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People		667.173	94	7.098		
Within People	Between Items	58.379	17	3.434	7.207	.000
	Residual	761.427	1598	.476		
	Total	819.806	1615	.508		
Total		1486.979	1709	.870		
Grand Mean=4.67						

Survey Section D

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	101	94.4
	Excluded[a]	6	5.6
	Total	107	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.932	.932	17

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum/Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	5.031	4.762	5.376	.614	1.129	.029	17
Item Variances	.700	.491	.982	.491	2.000	.018	17

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People		568.174	100	5.682		
Within People	Between Items	47.368	16	2.960	7.614	.000
	Residual	622.103	1600	.389		
	Total	669.471	1616	.414		
Total		1237.645	1716	.721		
Grand Mean=5.03						

Appendix G:

Interpretation Panel Package

Interpretation Panel Package

Title of Study: The Relationship of Supervision and PLC's as Catalysts for Authentic Professional Growth: the study of one school division

Background of research project:

In the era of greater accountability in education there should be an attempt by school divisions to support authentic professional growth for teachers. The enhancement of educational experiences and learning of students is a goal shared by the process of instructional supervision, and the professional learning communities model (Nolan & Hoover, 2004; DuFour & DuFour, 2003). There has been considerable research into instructional supervision and more recently in professional learning communities. Meanwhile, there is very little in the connection and implications of one on the other. The purpose of the study is to investigate the links between professional learning communities and instructional supervisory practice as a catalyst for authentic professional growth.

This study focuses on the perceptions of one school division regarding the relationship of professional learning communities and instructional supervision as catalysts for authentic professional growth. Questionnaire research was used to gather the perceptions of teacher in relation to the criteria present in successful professional learning communities and in effective instructional supervision. An interpretation panel, a type of focus group, will be utilized to assist in interpreting the data collected from the questionnaire.

The study will specifically address the following research questions.

1. What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?
2. What is the level of agreement, by in-school administrators, that the qualities of effective instructional supervision, based on literature, are indeed qualities of effective instructional supervision?
3. What is the level of agreement, by teachers, that the qualities of successful professional learning communities, based on literature, are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?
4. What is the level of agreement, by in-school administrators, that the qualities of successful professional learning communities, based on literature, are indeed qualities of successful professional learning communities?
5. What are the criteria of successful professional learning communities based on the literature that are seen to relate to effective supervisory practice?

Purpose of the Interpretation Panel:

The interpretation panel will analyze and interpret the data collected from the survey already distributed. The panel will look at information collected from the summary, including the means and standard deviation for each question, results of each question categorized by years of experience and role in the school of survey participants, and top responses for each section in the survey. The panel will be asked for what resonates with them from the information presented, and to discuss possible reasons for the results.

Part A: Demographics

Provide the following Tables:

- 4.1: *Schools Represented in the Study*
- 4.2: *Overall Response Rate According to Position*
- 4.3: *Respondents: Organized According to Position and Years of Experience*
- 4.4: *Respondents: Organized According to Grade Taught* (Teachers N=89)

Part B: Qualities of Successful Professional Learning Communities

Provide Table 4.5: *Qualities of Successful Professional Learning Communities: Total Respondents*

Interpretation Panel:

Is there anything in these items that surprises you? Why or why not?

What resonates with you?

Provide Table 4.6: *Qualities of Successful Professional Learning Communities: Comparison of Mean Scores According to Position*

Interpretation Panel:

Is there anything in these items that surprises you? Why or why not?

What resonates with you?

Part C: Qualities of Effective Instructional Supervision

Provide Table 4.7: *Qualities Effective Instructional Supervision: Total Respondents*

Interpretation Panel:

Is there anything in these items that surprises you? Why or why not?

What resonates with you?

Provide Table 4.8: *Qualities of Effective Instructional Supervision: Perspectives According to Position*

Interpretation Panel:

Is there anything in these items that surprises you? Why or why not?

What resonates with you?

Section D: Qualities of Professional Learning Communities Impacting Effective Instructional Supervision

Provide Table 4.9: *PLC Qualities Impacting Effective Instructional Supervision: Total Respondents*

Interpretation Panel:

Is there anything in these items that surprises you? Why or why not?

What resonates with you?

Provide Table 4.10: *PLC Qualities of Effective Instructional Supervision: Comparison of Mean Scores According to Position*

Interpretation Panel:

Is there anything in these items that surprises you? Why or why not?

What resonates with you?

<u>Further Analysis of Different Respondent Groups</u>

Provide Table 4.11: *Qualities of Successful Professional Learning Communities: Comparison of Mean Scores According to Years of Experience*

Interpretation Panel:

Is there anything in this item that surprises you? Why or why not?

What resonates with you?

Provide Table 4.13: *Qualities of Effective Instructional Supervision: Significance of Differences According to Grade Level Taught*

Interpretation Panel:

Is there anything in this item that surprises you? Why or why not?

What resonates with you?

Provide Table 4.14: *Qualities of Effective Instructional Supervision: Significance of Differences According to Position*

Interpretation Panel:

Is there anything in these items that surprises you? Why or why not?

What resonates with you?

Provide Table 4.15: *PLC Qualities Critical to Effective Instructional Supervision: Comparison of Mean Responses According to Position*

Interpretation Panel:

Is there anything in these items that surprises you? Why or why not?

What resonates with you?

<u>Interpretation Panel General Questions to Consider:</u>

1. What are the most important findings?

2. What are the implications on the operation of a school system?

3. What are the silences? What things are we saying about instructional supervision and professional learning communities that have not been said in the data?