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Teachers' and Center Leaders' Sensemaking of Inquiry-Based Professional Learning in Early Childhood Education and Care Programs: A Multiple Case Study

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by

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Dedication

To my children, Kaden and the ‘twins’ who were my ultimate motivation to finish; To my husband, Keith who followed, supported, and encouraged me throughout this process; To my parents who have always believed in me, taught me to never give up, and have reminded me that finding and sharing our voice is more than the words we speak; To my sisters who I could never live without; and to my nieces and nephew, I love you all.

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And last but not least, Keith and Kaden, thank you. Thank you for loving me through this process and reminding me that no matter what happens in life, we have each other and for that I am so thankful.

Abstract

Teachers' and Center Leaders' Sensemaking of Inquiry-Based Professional Learning in Early Childhood Education and Care Programs: A Multiple Case Study

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Professional development (PD) in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is at a critical juncture within the current accountability and standards movement. Various stakeholders position PD as a necessity to ready children within a neoliberal framing of the education process and posit universal training/PD as a solution. Conversely, many scholars continue to call for more critical approaches such as inquiry-based professional learning (IBPL) to better support the linguistically and culturally diverse early childhood landscape and address larger social-justice inequities. Yet, little is known about the mechanisms responsible for sustaining such IBPL practices. This research, therefore explores how center leaders and teachers of three ECEC programs made sense of enacting and engaging in varying forms of IBPL. Specifically guided by two research questions: 1) How do school leaders and teachers make sense of PL and their experiences

within them and their school community? 2) How do school leaders and teachers make sense of IBPL and their experiences within them and their school community?

Chapter 1 introduces my research questions and framing of this study. Chapter 2 reviews four stands of the literature pertinent to this study. First, it explores how PD has been defined and understood by identifying current best practices as well as exploring critical understandings within ECEC. Next, the chapter synthesizes relevant literature in the areas of teacher development research and highlights how teachers learn. Then, the chapter explores IBPL specifically by first defining then illuminating the differences between PL and IBPL as well as the varying ways IBPL has been enacted in ECEC programs. Chapter 2 then closes with a review of the theoretical framework that informs this study, sensemaking. Chapter 3 details the methodology that guided this instrumental multiple case study including data collection and analysis. Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings from this research. Chapter 4 looks at how teachers and center leaders made sense of PL and Chapter 5 looks at how they made sense of IBPL specifically. Chapter 6 addresses the significance of these findings and concludes with a discussion of implications and suggestions for future research.

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INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1: Introduction

My personal interest in early childhood education and care (ECEC) directors' and teachers' engagement in what I have conceptualized as ongoing center-based inquiry based professional learning (IBPL) as a form of professional development (PD) stems from my own experiences in the field as a former center director, a graduate student, and currently as a teacher educator. Through these experiences, I have come to value ongoing IBPL for those around me but more specifically for myself. IBPL, which I have conceptualized utilizing a combination of a variety of forms of professional learning theories (e.g. teacher research, inquiry reflective teaching/practice, teacher/practitioner research, communities of practice, teacher inquiry, learning circles, professional learning communities, and critically knowing early childhood communities) enables teachers to critically reflect on their practices, to "question the fundamental goals of teaching learning, and schooling… raise questions about power and authority," and to question the role teachers "play in broader social and intellectual movements" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 9). Specifically, ongoing IBPL enables teachers to engage with theory and practice in ways that are meaningful to them as well as the children, families, and communities in which they work.

My professional and academic experiences have driven my passion towards questioning professional development (PD) enactments – particularly in IBPL – and have sparked the desire to empower directors and teachers to take ownership of their ongoing

learning in addition to their work with young children. This stems from my commitment to ensure all children in early care (e.g., preschool, childcare centers, in-home programs, etc.) are provided with 'quality' care. I recognize that 'quality' is a term that is heavily used and often defined by 'best practices.' However, when 'quality' is defined and 'normalized' in this way, it tends to further inscribe the status quo, privileging white middle-class ideologies and inscribing binaries (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007). Therefore, in this research, I work to bring these issues to the forefront by posing IBPL as an opportunity for teachers to critically and intentionally address challenges such as these within the lived realities of their current working environments, and I use the term 'quality' to describe learning environments that allow for and foster complexity and multiplicity, where teachers support children's learning in ways that are respectful and inclusive of the diverse children and families in their care and the communities in which they work. I recognize the problematic nature of trying to move away from further inscribing the status quo while continuing to use terms entangled in positivist and linear notions (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2013; Moss, 2016). Yet, I still choose to use 'quality' as a term to illuminate a desire for all children to have access to early childhood spaces that foster learning in complex and diverse ways and that move beyond readying them 'academically' for school, or worse, for the sole purpose of becoming economic earners and consumers (Heckman, 2008). I therefore suggest that there is not one way to define or to evaluate 'quality,' but rather, there are multiple looks and feels.

Furthermore, in a field with high turnover rates where 15% of preschool teachers and 29% of childcare workers leave their jobs annually (Whitebook, Sakai, & Kipnis,

2010), I see PD as an opportunity for teacher retention. By offering teachers a space to engage in challenging and thought-provoking questions and critical reflection, PD can be empowering for teachers. Additionally, I see PD as a way to illuminate the expertise of teachers in the field while simultaneously working to support transformational change that better meets the needs of the children, families and communities they serve.

In this introduction chapter, I first outline my past experiences as a director, a graduate student and as a teacher educator and how those roles have impacted and informed my interest in researching further PD opportunities for teachers and directors, specifically from an ongoing inquiry perspective. I then lay out the purpose of this study, followed by the significance and importance of this work and the research questions that guided this study. Finally, I define key terms that will be used throughout this study, to provide clarity in how I understand and use them within this research as many of the terms used have multiple meanings in the literature.

DIRECTOR

My personal experience as a director of a private for-profit full day childcare center required me to provide my staff PD. While teachers participated in two dedicated 'professional development' days per year, the company I worked for required directors to implement and 'train' our teaching teams on company prescribed initiatives. I often felt limited as a director because the required 'trainings' typically did not take into account the individual teachers, students, families, or communities of the specific center in which I worked. As a director, I had very little input into what took place in the two training

days, regardless of my own knowledge and understanding of the teachers' and children's needs. For example, at one point the teaching team I worked with was very interested in thinking about how to utilize the outdoor space in different ways and PD geared towards outdoor environments or time and space to discuss ideas pertaining to outdoors would have been very empowering for the team. However, because I was forced to implement required trainings from our larger company, the teachers' interest in outdoor environments was not included in their PD. By limiting PD to company dictated initiatives and trainings, I was hindered in my ability as a director to tap into the specific needs or inquiries of the teachers and children in our program. Teachers often openly expressed a lack of desire to attend these two training days and said they would rather use the time working in their classrooms or have a say in workshops they could attend. These two days were to be dedicated to 'professional development' and 'designed' to benefit teachers. However, in most cases, they were geared towards achieving larger corporate agendas (e.g., increasing enrollment and/or retention of families) and were not empowering or motivating for the teachers or myself as the director. Ultimately, these trainings typically had a bottom-line goal of increasing revenue. Regardless of being hidden under the guise of increasing 'quality' or 'school readiness,' they were ultimately profit driven. Because of this lack of engaging or thought-provoking PD, I sought out further resources for myself and began a Master of Arts program at a local state university.

GRADUATE STUDENT

As a graduate student, my motivation to think differently about my practices as a director increased, and ultimately, led me to think about different opportunities for PD for my teaching team. Pursuing that degree while simultaneously being a director rejuvenated me and altered how I perceived my work with teachers. It opened a more formal opportunity to critically reflect upon my role as a director through engaging in teacher research (Castle, 2012). I was inspired by dialogue about early childhood practices with other educators within my courses, as well as engaging in reflective teacher research. College courses were not something readily available to all staff at the center in which I worked due to a variety of reasons such as financial and time constraints. Yet, because I was heavily impacted and inspired by my own educational experiences, I wondered how I could create a similar environment for my teachers--a space where they too could engage in similar collegial conversations, engage with current research, and critically reflect on their practices with each other. I then decided to bring practitioner inquiry to the teaching team. I created time and space for on-going inquiry to take place in the center by re-structuring and re-evaluating monthly staff meetings. By intentionally moving checklist items such as, “be sure to clean the bathrooms,” to a weekly scoop email that conveyed these important items, I opened up time during our meetings to focus on inquiry rather than day-to-day task-oriented items.

Engaging my team in collaborative inquiry supported increased teacher engagement and reduced turnover rates (Englehardt, 2014). These ‘successful’ results pushed me to continue to inquire into this issue further and think about how continued

research might support and inspire other directors/administrators to create similar spaces within their own programs. I often talked with other directors about instituting something similar in their programs. Yet, I was quickly given a variety of reasons why such ongoing inquiry would not be possible in their centers. This led me to further question what was needed for more centers/programs to be able to implement such practices and if there were programs out there currently engaging in such practices, what could be learned from them.

TEACHER EDUCATOR

Finally, as a teacher educator and researcher I am challenged to think about the current landscape of ECEC spaces where children ages 0-5 years are cared for, typically referred to as preschool or childcare programs. Research indicates that teacher education and professional development are key aspects in helping programs provide 'quality' experiences for the children in their care (Early et al., 2006; Pianta, 2006; Tout, Zaslow & Berry, 2006) and PD continues to be viewed as an entry point to meet this growing 'need' (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford, & Howes, 2002; Hamre et al., 2012; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2015; Pianta, Barnett, Burchinal, & Thornburg, 2009; Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin, & Knoche, 2009). Yet, the diverse landscape of children, families, and communities in the US calls attention to the need to broaden our notion of 'quality.' As Tobin (2005) noted, "Quality in early childhood education should be a *process rather than a product*, *an ongoing conversation* rather than a document" (p. 434; emphasis added). With continuous growth in the cultural diversity

of the US population (US Census Bureau, 2013), and ECEC participation by children and families on the rise (Barnett, Epstein, Friedman, Sansanelli, & Hustedt, 2009), it is now more important than ever to research multiple entry points into supporting teachers' work with young children (Sheridan, et al., 2009). This is especially the case as universal 'best practices,' such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), may not fully meet the needs of all children, teachers, programs or communities (Cannella, 1997).

To that end, PD that reflects the principles of IBPL creates openings for ongoing conversations and reflections, and positions teachers as knowledgeable 'becomings', capable of transformational change (Moss, 2014). By providing teachers agency, or an active voice in their own ongoing professional learning, IBPL creates opportunities for diverse capability expansion (Adair, 2014). Furthermore, ongoing IBPL provides opportunities for teachers to not only have an active voice in their own professional growth, but it also moves beyond prescribed, often scripted, PD that typically takes up an academic readiness agenda. As Tsoukas and Chia (2002) said, "change is all there is" (p. 576), and as such, it is important to view teachers as unfinished 'projects' (Britzman, 2003) who can be critical of normative – and often taken for granted - 'truth' practices. By taking an inquiry approach to PD, IBPL creates opportunity for continuous change for teachers, directors, and researchers alike.

Combined, these experiences have led me to value ongoing IBPL for ECEC teachers, and more specifically, for myself. Scholars have theorized and enacted a variety

of inquiry learning practices that place emphasis on collaboration and critical reflection, including reflective teaching/practice (e.g., Zeichner, 2008), teacher/practitioner research (e.g., Castle, 2012; Cochran-Smith & Lylte, 1993; 2009), communities of practice (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991), teacher inquiry (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lylte, 1999), learning circles (e.g., Moss & Pence, 1994; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, Kocher, Elliot, & Sanchez, 2015), professional learning communities, (e.g., DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Grossman, Wineberg, & Woolworth, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001), and critically knowing early childhood communities (Mac Naughton, 2005). I pull from a combination of these theories in my conceptualization and enactment of IBPL.

I view ongoing IBPL as a way to create opportunities to disrupt the status quo by enabling teachers and administrators to question, critique, and share their various expertise and experiences as they work towards addressing social injustices, creating a more democratic society for all, and ensuring their practices are respectful and inclusive of the diverse needs and voices of the students, families and communities they serve. It is because critical topics such as these require deep and meaningful conversations, as well as time to revisit, rethink, and challenge taken-for-granted 'truths,' that I argue for ongoing IBPL. I believe ongoing IBPL can provide the much-needed space for these conversations to take place with teachers and children alike and to provide the space for ongoing change and the opportunity to adapt and respond to larger societal needs.

Purpose of the Study

In early childhood education, particularly within the U.S. setting in which this study takes place, in-service PD has historically served two main purposes: 1) ongoing training for teachers who may have no prior higher early childhood educational experiences, and 2) as a way to provide continuing educational opportunities to meet licensing and/or various accreditation requirements (Gomez, Kagan, Fox, 2015). Dominant notions of in-service PD have tended to work towards improving teachers' knowledge and to keep them abreast of current research and 'best' practices within the field (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Often, these single shot training days follow a "technical-rationalist assumption that the techniques by which the problems of teaching are to be solved and are universally applicable to *any* teaching and learning context: to any child, by any teacher, in any school whatsoever" (Parker, 1997, p.15). This is especially the case within ECEC spaces, serving children 0-5 years, where the combination of low and varying teacher education requirements is further complicated by the growing interest in ECEC from a variety of stakeholders such as policymakers (e.g., NAEYC, 2016; Office of the Press Secretary, 2013; ReadyNation, 2014) (Ackerman, 2006). Stakeholders often position PD as a necessity for meeting a growing anxiety to 'ready' children within a neoliberal framing of the education process.

Neoliberalism places emphasis on the market economy whereby individuals, especially children, are seen as "autonomous entrepreneurs who are responsible for their own self, success and failure" (Hursh, 2016). Moss (2014) referred to this as "the story of quality and high returns" whereby finding and "apply[ing] the correct human

technologies-aka ‘quality’- during early childhood you will get high returns on investment including improved education, employment and earnings and reduced social problems” (p. 3). Following Heckman’s (2008) notion of ‘human capital’ enables one to see how individualistic and neoliberal images of the educator can also be played out within PD spaces. These notions frame not only the children and teachers, but the learning process as well, as merely developmental processes; whereby they can be seen as “sequential and predictable” and can be “measured through articulated norms of skills and behaviours” (Elliot, 2010, p. 7). Therefore ‘experts’ can teach these skills and ‘best practices’ to teachers who are to merely replicate them in practice. Yet, ECEC programs are diverse and complex and universal ‘best practices’ may not fully meet their varying needs.

Moss (2014) further noted that:

> The story of quality and high returns dulls and deadens the spirit, reducing the potentially exciting and vibrant subject of early childhood education to ‘a one-dimensional linear reductive thinking that *excludes and closes off* all other ways of thinking and doing.’ (p. 5)

By placing emphasis on defining these early educational experiences within the limited notion of ‘quality’ and quantifiable spaces for measurement and accountability, this kind of PD can limit teachers by keeping them from understanding and meeting students’ needs or including students’ voices across a range of socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic communities. Yet, because empirical research has highlighted a link between quality programs and societal returns, as well as school readiness and successes in school

and later in life for young children (Heckman, Moon, & Pinto, Savelyev, & Yavitz, 2010; Williams, Landry, Anthony, Swank, & Crawford, 2012), researchers continue to call for PD and training as a way to increase teachers' abilities to provide 'quality' educational spaces that can 'ready' young children for the future (Hamre et al., 2012; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2015; Pianta, et al., 2009). Yet, findings from empirical research have also illuminated that the typical single shot trainings that foster skills-based learning have little effect on teachers' ongoing teaching practices (e.g., Nicholson & Reifle, 2011). Attention therefore has then been placed on establishing 'best practices' for PD which have included providing ongoing professional development that includes communities of practice (e.g., Cherrington & Thornton, 2015) and/or coaching and mentoring (e.g., Han, 2014; Jeon, Buettner & Hur, 2015; Zaslow, 2014) to create spaces for teachers to get feedback and continued attention surrounding their PD encounters, though little is known about the mechanisms responsible for sustaining such practices (Sheridan, et al., 2009). While there is a growing body of research within the Canadian context in relation to key findings from the Investigating Quality Project (2005–2011) and the Community Facilitators Project (2011–current) (Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2017), which have worked to broaden and deepen the notion of quality within ECE spaces through a variety of avenues but specifically including a focus on centering learning circles as a professional development opportunity for teachers to understand and implement the BC Early Learning Framework (ELF) (e.g., Hodgins & Kummen, 2018; Kummen & Hodgins, 2019), not much has been done within the U.S. context.

Thus, more information within the U.S. context is needed to fully understand how programs serving children ages 0-5 engage in ongoing IBPL. By coming to understand directors/administrators and teachers' lived experiences and understandings of engaging in IBPL, this research will offer insight for sustaining such practices. This research will highlight the complexities of engaging in such practices and how directors and teachers make sense of ongoing IBPL practices. Furthermore, this research will illuminate how directors can provide IBPL opportunities that offer teachers time and space to foster learning through such acts as examining current research, connecting theory to practice, thinking critically about their own understandings of teaching, questioning their own practices and taken for granted knowledges, working collaboratively to address matters of importance in their daily interactions with children, families, and their communities, or to tackle and address larger systemic issues. Additionally, I hope to learn how teachers make sense of such practices and their understandings and sense of agency (Adair, 2014) within their PD experiences that in turn allow for the expansion of their capabilities on a broad scale versus merely preparing them to teach academic readiness skills (Brown, 2009).

Through this work, I use sensemaking (Coburn, 2001; Erickson, 2014) as my conceptual framework to assist me in understanding how directors/administrators' and teachers make sense of and enact IBPL within their programs with the hope that this work might help directors and teachers join conversations with teacher educators, and other various stakeholders who may be determining the future 'systems' of PD within ECEC spaces (Winton, Snyder, & Goffin, 2016). Because teachers and directors

cognitively and emotionally make meaning about their PD experiences from a combination of their current and prior knowledge and experiences with PD, their social relations with others, and the contexts in which they work, a sensemaking framework helps bring to light the various factors influencing PD engagements as well as calls attention to the "ecosystem" (Douglas, 2017, p. 85) that is fostering and nurturing it (Allen & Penuel, 2015; Jennings, 1996). Furthermore, while trainings, workshops, and college courses are valuable, change requires continual focus (Colmer, et al., 2014). IBPL can provide the space for ongoing and critically reflective learning. Furthermore, understanding how directors and teachers makes sense of their enactments and engagements in IBPL sheds light onto how such spaces can be further created and fostered within more ECEC programs.

Importance of the Study

My perspective and view of teachers as capable and competent researchers mirrors Rinaldi's (2004) notion of pedagogical documentation, whereby teachers are continually learning and relearning with children, families and communities through the use of documentation and reflection and are seen as co-constructors of knowledge. Viewing teachers as researchers positions them as having valuable information and experiences that contribute to their own professional learning and creates opportunities for teachers to "negotiate subjectivities, seek social justice and embrace 'curiosity, the unknown, doubt, error, crisis, [and] theory'" (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al., 2015, p. 66). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) identified this type of teacher learning as "knowledge-

of-practice" (p. 250); whereby, teacher learning is seen as an inquiry stance and is focused on addressing larger issues within a community or society. It is through collective and collaborative environments that the evaluation, critique, and opportunity to challenge the existing structures/status quo, that enables change to happen on a broader scale. By proposing teachers take an inquiry stance through PD, such work can create spaces for transformational change (Moss, 2014). Transformational change that creates the potential for emancipation from oppression by bringing something new to life can foster important values such as equality, democracy, and sustainability, and places importance on working with children towards meeting these goals.

Shulman's (2004) notion of wisdom of practice supports the need to not only rely on research from outside experts but also to turn to teachers themselves for knowledge about working with and teaching diverse children, families and communities, especially within ongoing PD. Shulman's work calls attention to and focuses on valuing teachers' experiences – especially in ECEC spaces where many veteran teachers have no formal higher education. Despite not having formal teacher training, many of these teachers, most of whom are women, often from non-dominant cultures, and who may not speak English (Bellm & Whitebook, 2006), have what Shulman (2004) identified as a 'wisdom of practice.' Such 'wisdoms' need to be considered as the field progresses forward in requiring an increasing amount of teacher training and/or qualifications. The knowledge and expertise of these veteran teachers needs to be heard – not silenced.

Moreover, Shulman's (2004) conception of wisdom of practice is ever important in thinking about PD because it requires teacher educators to move beyond seeing

teachers as empty vessels to be filled with 'expert' knowledge, and instead, it frames them as practitioners with valuable knowledge about teaching as well. Conceptualizing teachers in this way creates the space for ECEC teachers and center leaders to think more broadly about their work and move towards addressing larger societal issues and contributes to their understanding of the diverse contextualized environments, children, and families the teachers work within and with.

Finally, utilizing Shulman's (2004) notion of wisdom of practice opens the space within PD to foster dialogue among teachers, including posing questions and considering multiple 'solutions' to the issues being explored. It creates an understanding of and respect for the diverse ECEC spaces and places value on the teachers' unique knowledges of the children, families, and communities in which they work. Furthermore, the notion of 'wisdom of practice' frames teachers as capable and competent and moves away from viewing them merely as 'babysitters' who need to be 'trained' by including their experiential knowledge in conversations regarding 'best practices' and beyond (Kagan, Kauerz, & Tarrant, 2008). When researchers and teachers engage in such collective dialogue, both learn from each other's experiences and perspectives and knowledge can be broadened.

Additionally, because teaching is complex, our society is diverse, and there are multiple ways of engaging in the important work with children, there is value to hearing both 'expert' outsiders' knowledge (i.e. 'theory') and the practical lived experiences and knowledges or 'wisdom of practice.' As Lortie (1975) found in his sociological work, many future teachers going through teacher education programs find it challenging to

implement the theory they learn in their teacher prep programs as they tend to teach in the ways they were taught. This, along with the fact that many teachers in ECEC programs lack formal college training, creates a disconnect between ECEC theory and practice (Reynold, Flores, & Riojas-Cortez, 2006). Therefore, due to teachers' past experiences as students and/or their current daily-lived experiences as teachers, it can be challenging for early educators to work against the often engrained understandings of what a classroom should look like (Lortie, 1975).

The theory/practice divide is something that has been heavily researched (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001; Everett, Luera, & Otto, 2008; Sugishita, 2003; Zeni, 2001). Researchers have therefore posited PD as a way to support teachers in merging and connecting theory and practice (e.g., Riojas-Cortez, Alanís, & Flores, 2013). IBPL specifically creates space for support to be given from fellow teachers, directors and/or teacher educators to engage teachers in thinking about how to incorporate theory into practice and to reflect on the how and why of their current practices (Wood & Bennett, 2000). Moreover, IBPL provides opportunities for teachers to be driven by their own needs, their students' needs, and the needs of their students' families and the larger communities in which they work, which allows teachers to engage in critical reflection and questioning regarding their own practice and larger social justice issues. IBPL provides the framework to work towards an overarching goal of enabling teachers and directors to question whether or not they are educating for a more democratic society; a society that creates equitable opportunities for all children and families by creating opportunities for teachers and directors to question the 'normative' taken for granted

‘truths’ and ‘best practices’ rather than engaging in practices that simply re-inscribe the status quo.

Furthermore, as PD systems, or ‘best practices’ regarding PD are being developed (e.g., Winton, et al., 2016) to ensure access to ‘quality’ ECEC programs, it is vital for the voices of teachers and center leaders to be heard. As prior researchers (e.g., Diamond & Powell, 2011; Koh & Neuman, 2009; Norris, 2001; Rudd, Lambert, Satterwhite, & Smith, 2009) have shown, ongoing PD that provides follow-up support is needed to offer teachers opportunities for change. Thus center leaders play an important role in creating time and space for such ongoing PD opportunities to take place (Goffin & Washington, 2007). It is therefore imperative to include the voices of both teachers and center leaders regarding how they make sense of PD in this conversation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Professional development in ECEC is at a critical juncture within the accountability and standards movement (Buysse, Winton, & Rous, 2009; Diamond, Justice, Siegler, & Snyder, 2013). For instance, there have been increased calls by various stakeholder groups, such as policymakers and early education advocates (e.g., NAEYC, 2016; Office of the Press Secretary, 2013; ReadyNation, 2014), for more PD in ECEC. Such calls are linked to the ever increasing body of research that highlights a strong relationship between the training and education levels of early childhood teachers and the quality of care children receive (e.g., Helburn, 1995; NICHD, 2000; Whitebook Sakai, & Kipnis, 1989). In addition, many states have implemented quality improvement

initiatives, including Quality Rating Initiative Scales (QRIS) that include PD as a key component, to improve program quality (Tout et al., 2010). While defining and implementing 'best practices' to ensure quality programs are well intended and needed, many scholars continue to call for more critical approaches to PD that can more authentically support the linguistically and culturally diverse communities of teachers, children and families in which teachers work while also working towards addressing larger social justice inequities (e.g., Canella, 1997; Dahlberg, 2016; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Moss, 2016). In addition, such scholars call for PD that moves beyond meeting a neoliberal agenda towards a broader focus on the child as a whole, rather than merely someone to be 'readied' for the future. Moreover, research has shown that most ECEC PD is of poor quality and has a limited impact on early educators' classroom practices (e.g., Linder, et al., 2016; Nicholson & Reifel, 2011).

Additionally, due to financial limitations and time constraints, ECEC teachers often attend and participate in whatever training and/or PD opportunities their employers provide and/or is required by their state or accreditation requirements, ultimately leaving directors and/or principles responsible for ensuring they meet these various regulations (Adams & Poersch, 1997). There are many factors that influence directors' abilities to support their teachers' PD opportunities, such as time and funding sources, and it is important to bring these complexities to light. Yet, little research has been done to understand these varying complexities and the impact they have on directors, and in turn, teachers and children. Such a study could provide insight into how to meet the wide-ranging needs of the various ECEC programs, directors, teachers, children, families, and

communities that make up the current landscape of the ECEC field. Furthermore, few studies have looked at the role directors/administrators play in PD (e.g., Colmer, et al., 2014; Ryan, Whitebrook, Kipnis & Sakai, 2011), how directors approach their work more broadly (e.g., Muijs et al., 2004; Sanders, Deihl, & Kyler, 2007) or in understanding the theoretical concept of leadership within ECEC spaces (Aubrey, Godfrey & Harris, 2013; Douglas, 2017). Demonstrating the empirical need for research that seeks to gain insight into both directors' and teachers' current sensemaking of PD could illuminate deeper, more nuanced understandings of the potential ways directors might support teachers in providing the children and families with whom they work an ECEC program that meets their varying needs (Sheridan, et al., 2009). Additionally, such research is needed to help reveal how teachers and directors in the broad range of ECEC programs in the US currently offering IBPL are making sense of their experiences.

During this critical time in ECEC within the U.S. when various stakeholders are weighing in on how best to improve access to high quality centers for all young children, it is important for the conversation to include the voices of teachers and directors who work directly within the centers. Understanding directors' and teachers' lived experiences engaging in IBPL specifically and PD generally can illuminate a need for higher educational systems to better support and build relationships with those working directly in ECEC programs. Furthermore, by coming to understand how directors/administrators and teachers working within programs engaging in IBPL make sense of their experiences, policymakers, key stakeholders, and early childhood researchers, as well as other center directors and administrators can gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how to

support and foster IBPL experiences as they continue to work towards improving access to high quality centers for all children.

In particular, qualitative research is needed to provide deeper investigations into the directors and teachers' sensemaking about engaging in IBPL. To pursue such an investigation, I will address the following two research questions in two states: California and Texas. Although these states have different public education systems, they both have populations that seem to be representative of the increasing diversity and complexity of the US population whereby non-white populations currently outnumber white populations (Hall, Tach, & Lee, 2016).

Research Questions

1) How do school leaders and teachers make sense of PL and their experiences within them and their school community?

2) How do school leaders and teachers make sense of IBPL and their experiences within them and their school community?

Key Terms

Early Childhood Education and Care: Early childhood education and care (ECEC) can be defined in many ways. For the purposes of this research I am defining ECEC as programs that serve children ages 0-5 years.

Childcare Center/Program: Within this research I am focusing on licensed programs, serving children in the age ranges of 0-5 years and typically referred to as child care centers, preschool, pre-kindergarten, or transitional kindergarten. Focusing on:

Community based, half-day, private for profit: open to general public willing to pay enrollment fees, with a for-profit status (may include children receiving government funds, but individually based and not center based).

Community based full day private for profit: open to general public willing to pay enrollment fees, with a for-profit status (may include children receiving government funds, as well as center-based scholarship opportunities).

University based full day non-profit: open to students, professors and those working at the University willing to pay enrollment fees (three tiers of tuition based on income), with a non-profit status (may also include children receiving government funding).

Director/Administrator/Center Leaders: Those responsible for the overall operations of a center/program. Responsibilities include the hiring/firing of teachers, maintaining licensing regulations, and overseeing curriculum development/implementation. In some cases, this person may be a principal, a center director, or possibly a site supervisor. For the purposes of this study, this person is the person within each program who sits at the top of the 'hierarchy.'

Teachers/Educators: Anyone working within a program that works directly with children. Often divided out or classified as head teacher, co-teacher, or assistant teacher. Much of the research literature also refers to teachers as educators, early educators, caregivers, or childcare providers. In this study I will refer to them interchangeably but mainly use teacher.

Professional Development/Professional Learning: Professional development is an

ambiguous term (Spodek, 1996). It can be considered both in terms of preparation or 'education' as in its role when working with pre-service teachers, or it can also be thought about in terms of ongoing 'training,' as typically referred to when working with in-service teachers (Zaslow, Halle, Tout, & Weinstein, 2011). Within this research, I use professional development to refer to the ongoing learning spaces/opportunities that practicing teachers engage in (also known as in-service trainings).

The term development, however, is problematic in itself but is still used in much of the research literature. I prefer to use the term professional learning as Campbell and McNamara (2013) explained it as: "the assimilation of knowledge rather than its gathering" (p. 20). I do this to move the conversation away from transmission models of knowledge and skills to enhance proficiency, and towards "ongoing contextualized activit[ies]" that enable teachers to link theory and practice (Colmer, et al., 2014, p. 104). I think about professional learning as a way to provide opportunity for teachers with varying qualifications to work together through the use of documentation of practice towards the co-construction of pedagogy (Colmer, et al., 2014). Positioning 'professional development' as 'professional learning' fits better with constructivist notions of learning and teaching (Cherrington & Thornton, 2013). Yet, within this research I will use both professional development (PD) and professional learning (PL) interchangeably to refer to spaces practicing teachers engage in in-service learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2: Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

Within this chapter, I review the existing literature as it pertains to my research questions. The focus of my research is on understanding how directors' and teachers' make sense of professional learning (PL) and ongoing inquiry-based professional learning (IBPL). While research has not addressed this topic specifically, there are four main strands of literature I will focus on that pertain to this issue. The first is research surrounding current PD practices in ECEC. This literature calls attention to not only how PD is defined but also identifies the purpose and goals of PD within ECEC spaces and ends by noting what are considered the 'best practices' within PD. The second strand of literature surrounds the critical understanding of PD in ECEC. This literature conveys the ineffectiveness of single day trainings and points to the significant role the positioning of teachers and the framing of teachers' knowledge has in determining the types of PD opportunities teachers have access to and illuminates a need for more ongoing PD to better meet the needs of teachers and children in ECEC spaces. Third is the strand of literature surrounding teacher development research, which highlights how teachers learn. Fourth is the strand of literature surrounding inquiry-based PL practices within ECEC; I first define IBPL, then highlight the strengths and challenges of IBPL and end by exploring the key differences between IBPL and PD. Finally, I end this chapter by introducing the theoretical framework, sensemaking (Coburn, 2001; Dorner, 2012; Erickson, 2014; Weick, 2004) that guides this research study. In terms of the PL

literature, I acknowledge that there are other strands such as the shift towards technology-based PD, but I have specifically chosen to focus solely on these four strands of the literature as I feel they best articulate and support the prior research pertaining to my research questions and IBPL specifically. Exploring topics such as technology-based PD (e.g., Ackerman, 2017) is worthy of further investigation. However, I will only discuss it as it relates to how it has been incorporated in inquiry practices.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ECEC

Defining PD

PD can be considered both in terms of preparation or 'education' as in its role when working with pre-service teachers, or it can also be thought about in terms of ongoing 'training,' as typically referred to when working with in-service teachers (Zaslow, Martinez-Beck, Tout, & Halle, 2011). Here, focus is on the PD literature centering on in-service teachers, where practicing ECEC teachers typically engage in some form of 'training' or development with the goal of improving program quality (Sheridan, et al., 2009) or student outcomes (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). Such PD is typically results driven and focused on meeting standards across cognitive, communicative, social–emotional, and behavioral domains through curriculum implementation (Guskey, 2000; Guskey, 2001). 'Outcomes' are therefore the ultimate measure of these 'successful' PD initiatives (Sheridan, et al., 2009).

PD traditionally comes in five forms: formal education; credentialing; specialized, on-the-job in-service training; coaching; and communities of practice or collegial study

groups (Zaslow & Martinez-Beck, 2006). Most of these in-service PD opportunities rely on and utilize an 'expert' to 'novice' knowledge transmission; whereby generalized knowledge is provided by a trainer or 'expert' to groups of teachers 'novices' and may lack follow-up or feedback on actual teaching practices (Pianta, 2006). Such transmission models are often one-directional and rely on using hypothetical situations rather than working from teachers' own lived experiences (Sheridan, et al., 2009).

Purpose and Goals of PD

PD for practicing ECEC teachers specifically has been positioned as being a critical component in improving access to quality programs and experiences for all young children (Martinez-Beck & Zaslow, 2006). Various stakeholder groups, such as policymakers and early education advocates (e.g., NAEYC, 2016; Office of the Press Secretary, 2013; ReadyNation, 2014), continue to call for more PD in ECEC and public investments are being made to support these PD opportunities (Whitebook & Ryan, 2011). Furthermore, most states require on-going PD for teachers to maintain compliance ranging from 3 to 30 hours annually (National Center Early Childhood Quality Assurance, 2015). Such calls are linked to an ever increasing body of research that highlights a strong relationship between the training and education levels of ECEC teachers and the quality of care children receive (e.g., Eurydice & Eurostat Report, 2014; Helburn, 1995; NICHD, 2000; Whitebook et al., 1989). In addition, quality improvement initiatives, including Quality Rating Initiative Scales (QRIS) that include PD as a key component, to improve program quality have been initiated and enacted across the US as

a way to foster improved access to quality programs for all young children (Tout et al., 2010). Likewise, within the current accountability and standards movement, PD in ECEC continues to remain at the forefront as a way to ensure children are 'readied' for the future (Buysse, et al., 2009; Diamond, et al., 2013).

To improve quality, Sheridan and colleagues (2009) posited there are two main objectives when considering PD for ECEC educators. Firstly PD should "advance the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices of early childhood providers in their efforts to educate children and support families" and secondly, PD should "promote a culture for ongoing professional growth in individuals and systems" (p. 379). These 'levels' of PD therefore can be seen as first an "outside-in" process, where "professional growth comes from external authorities, imparted through lectures, readings, demonstrations, and verbal advice from peers, supervisors, coaches, or consultants" (p. 380). Followed by PD that then becomes an "inside-out" process in which teachers take ownership of their own "ongoing growth and improvement through continued study of current and best practices and reflective personal goal setting in collaboration with respected colleagues" (Sheridan, et al., 2009, p. 380).

Best Practices in PD

To foster PD that can meet such goals as improving quality in all ECEC spaces, attention has been placed within the research literature on establishing 'best practices' for PD. These 'best practices' have included providing ongoing PD with content connected to the participants' everyday practices (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin 1995,

Loucks-Horsley, 1995), fostering communities of practice (e.g., Cherrington & Thornton, 2015) and/or offering coaching and mentoring (e.g., Han, 2014; Jeon, et al., 2015; Zaslow, 2014) that work to create spaces for teachers to get feedback and continued attention surrounding their PD encounters. For example, Linder and colleges (2016) used the work of Diamond and Powell (2011), Koh and Neuman (2009), Norris (2001), and Rudd et al. (2009) to illuminate the need for ongoing models of PD in ECEC to provide teachers with not only access to opportunities for reflection and follow-up but to improve teachers' instructional practices as well.

Furthermore, Zaslow and colleagues (2010) prepared a literature review for the U.S. Department of Education of the 'best' or effective practices that current research has advocated for within ECEC PD. They posited a set of core features that characterize effective professional development:

- Having specific and articulated objectives.
- Practice should be an explicit focus and link early educator knowledge with practice.
- Collective participation of teachers from the same classrooms or schools.
- The intensity and duration should be matched to the content being conveyed.
- Educators should be prepared to conduct child assessments and interpret their results as a tool for ongoing monitoring of the effects of PD.
- PD should be appropriate for the organizational context and be aligned with standards for practice (pp. xii-xiv)

While positing that these are the key elements of “effective” PD that research has highlighted, Zaslow and colleague’s review also illuminated many additional gaps within the overall understanding of PD. Specifically noting a gap in PD that fosters the development of the ‘whole child’ rather than focusing on a single learning domain as most of the studies they analyzed included.

Combined, while there are many varying theories of ‘best’ practices within the ECEC PD literature, it seems that there continues to be focus on finding effective PD and in finding ‘best’ practices that support teachers learning. Collectively, however, these studies have illuminated a need for PD to be ongoing; include opportunities for dialogue, feed back and reflection; have clear objectives; incorporate teachers’ perspectives and experiences; as well as create space for teachers to engage actively in their own PD and not be passive recipients of knowledge.

Critical Understandings of PD in ECEC

Single day PD

Yet even with such ‘best practices’ noted in current research that include understandings of how adults learn, most often, ECEC teachers are still engaging in PD that takes the form of single day workshops (Macintyre & Kim, 2010). For example, Linder and colleagues (2016) employed a multi-phase mixed-methods study that examined 320 child care providers and 1022 recipients’ PD experiences, and they found that the majority of PD experiences described by both general providers and recipients occurred in short one-hour sessions. These included one-off workshop-type sessions and

conferences (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007) and often lacked connection with the perceived needs of the teachers, or of the children and families they served (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Malone, Straka, & Logan, 2000). Linder et al. (2016) posited that such single shot, short session PD opportunities, where content is unrelated to practice and provides little opportunity for follow-up or evaluation, are outdated practices. Empirical research has also illuminated that these single-shot trainings have little effect on teachers' ongoing teaching practices (e.g., Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991). For instance, Nicholson & Reifel's (2011) research investigating teachers' perceptions of PD found that the majority of teachers in their study believed single day trainings were ineffective in supporting their teaching practices. These teachers further articulated that they felt they learned more through their on-the-job experiences and from other teachers in their programs than by attending the required trainings. Malone and colleagues (2000) also noted that because single day trainings do not always meet teachers' perceived needs and/or because of the lack of follow-up and feedback on trainings, teachers have trouble implementing or translating their new 'learnings' into their work with children. Such low retention rates of applying knowledge from single day PD into practice, points to their ineffectiveness in supporting teacher learning and their inability to meet needs of the children and communities in which the teachers work.

Therefore, calls for more critical approaches to PD that can more authentically support the diverse communities of teachers, children, families, and communities and work towards addressing social justice inequities continue to be made by researchers (e.g., Canella, 1997; Dahlberg, 2016; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Moss, 2016). Reyes

(2006) pointed out, "The greatest failing in the creation of a comprehensive professional development system is its inability to deal with difference" (p. 299). Furthermore, more PD spaces are needed that can bridge theory and practice (Wood & Bennett, 2000). Yet, PD research continues to show that the current strategies of PD are not adequately preparing teachers for the array of responsibilities, knowledge, and skills they are expected to demonstrate in their work with young children and their families (Zaslow, et al., 2010). Reyes (2006) offered dialogue as a potential PD avenue through which diversity could be included and valued.

Yet, many ECEC teachers are still required to attend isolated in-service sessions that provide ineffective material and lack connection to their own classrooms, rather than having opportunities to investigate content chosen by teachers themselves (Linder et al., 2016). Additionally, as Mac Naughton (2005) noted, by standardizing trainings towards 'quick fix' technocratic models that "emphasize the place of method and technique… the messiness, uncertainty and ethical dilemmas of relationships in teaching" are left out of the conversation (p. 193). She continued, "In doing so, this approach to 'improving teacher quality' diminishes the very person it targets - the educator - who wilts as yet another 'simple answer' fails them" (Mac Naughton, 2005, p. 193). Whereby expressing how standardized 'trainings' designed to train all teachers in similar ways actually may do more harm than good.

Framing of Teachers

Such technocratic positioning seems to be the norm in the ECEC PD empirical

literature and positions teachers as 'in-need-of.' For example, in Brown and Englehardt's (2016) metasynthesis of qualitative PD studies in ECEC, they found that researchers tend to frame ECEC teachers as not adequately 'trained' and in 'need' of support. Whether that be in general, within particular content areas, or in relation to teacher-child interactions; teachers are positioned as 'in-need' of knowledge. Such knowledge is then to be provided through the engagement in particular PD experiences developed and implemented by 'experts.' Brown and Englehardt (2016) posited that such positioning disregards the practical knowledge of the teachers and/or the role/goals of the school community in which they work. Such a positioning illuminates the deficit perspective often taken of teachers within the ECEC PD research literature. It does so by not recognizing the diverse knowledge of teachers or their 'wisdom of practice' (Shulman, 2004). Marginalized and devalued, teachers are positioned unfavorably within these single shot PD programs; especially the ECEC teacher, who is often already "unfortunately and inappropriately" positioned as a "babysitter" (Gomez, et al., 2015, p. 171). ECEC teachers' understandings and curiosities of their own contextualized environments and communities appear to be positioned within single shot PD as less important than universal understandings of 'best practices,' 'quality' or 'expert' knowledge.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) therefore offered an alternative perspective of teachers. They positioned teachers as capable and "deliberative intellectuals who constantly theorize practice as part of practice itself…," and who can engage in "joint construction of local knowledge…," who question "common assumptions…," and give

"thoughtful critique of the usefulness of research generated by others both inside and outside contexts of practice" (p. 2). Through such a positioning, dialogue is opened and teachers are positioned as capable of engaging themselves in PD. Doing so aligns with an inquiry framing of PD that allows teachers to critically question their own practices and ensure that the children, the classroom context and the communities in which they work, are included within their practices.

Freire (2000) further added that "problem-posing education" can position teachers as "beings in the process of *becoming*-as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (p. 84). Education with a goal of transformation is an ongoing activity (Moss, 2015). PD therefore, should also be an ongoing process whereby "education is thus constantly remade in the praxis" (Freire, 2000, p. 84). When teachers are positioned as becomings, particularly within the PD opportunities they engage in, it opens space for "dissonance, plurality, change, transience, and disparity" (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p. 67). In contrast, positioning teachers as "beings" places focus on "unity, identity, essence, structure, and discreteness" (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p. 67). When teachers are viewed as beings, they are positioned within the banking approach (Freire, 2000) of education. The banking approach fosters the notion that by merely making knowledge 'deposits' to teachers; account gaps can be filled. This perspective takes a very deficit view of both the child and the teacher. And yet, this is often the approach taken within workshops and single day PD spaces as noted above. Whereby, teachers must conform and be 'trained' in predetermined ways (Mac Naughton, 2005).

Contrary to the deficit, banking approach is a problem-posing approach toward education, PD and teachers themselves. Problem-posing “accepts neither a ‘well behaved’ present nor a predetermined future” (Freire, 2000, p. 84). Teachers positioned within this framing are able to view content within the “dynamic present” and therefore create opportunities for curriculum to become “revolutionary” (Freire, 2000, p. 84). Over a decade ago, Fleet and Patterson (2001) called attention to the work of Clark (1992) who highlighted that "research on teacher thinking supports the position that teachers are more active than passive, more ready to learn than resistant, more wise and knowledgeable than deficit, and more diverse and unique than they are homogenous” (Clark, 1992, p. 77). Fleet and Patterson then built upon this work by calling for PD to be given to teachers themselves. By positioning teachers as persons to be respected and trusted, Fleet and Patterson positioned teachers as agentic and who should have say in what PD opportunities they engage in. Such a positioning couples with best practices posited with the PD literature that has called for communities of practice (COP) and for teachers to take an active role in their own PD (e.g., Sheridan, et al., 2009).

Yet, as the research literature has illuminated, most teachers are not given such opportunities to have a voice in what types of PD they will engage in. For example, Linder and colleague’s (2016) multi-phase, mixed-methods study found that 45.3% of respondents felt they had limited or no choice in the PD they attended. They cite a Head Start teacher with a bachelor degree who responded, ‘We do not choose which professional development sessions to attend’ (Linder, et al., 2016, p.139). Underscoring here how this may be the norm for many ECEC teachers.

Teachers Perspectives of PD

Ackerman (2004) and Nicholson and Reifel (2011) further sought the perspectives of teachers to gain insight into what types of PD would best meet their needs as teachers. Nicholson and Reifel (2011) examined teachers' perceptions of PD and found that while working in states which required annual PD to meet state licensing requirements, teachers felt they gained more 'training' from their own centers and their hands-on experiences/mentorships with other teachers than from attending single shot trainings required to meet state regulations. Nicholson & Reifel, (2011) noted that because there were such minimal and often fragmented training opportunities, teachers often relied more on trial and error, or by watching other teachers than from formal trainings to inform their teaching practices.

Ackerman's (2004) qualitative study of conversations with two teachers' experiences with PD, one teacher working in a public center and one teacher working in a private center, found similar to others (Linder, et al., 2016; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Joyce & Showers, 2002), among other things that there was a desire/need for PD to happen on-site, particularly in relation to ensuring that the PD was linked and connected to the actual teaching context in which the teacher worked. For example, Ackerman (2004) quoted Robert, one of her participants who expressed this need as he stated, "You have to work with people for who they are". . . as "everybody [is] on a different racetrack" (p. 292). PD therefore should include providing teachers someone who was available to work with them directly, and get to know their individual needs versus merely offering a workshop based PD which may or may not connect to or include any

follow-up to actual classroom practices (Bruder, Mogro-Wilson, Stayton, & Dietrich, 2009).

Furthermore, findings from Linder and colleague's (2016) research also indicated an overall dissatisfaction with the quality and purpose of current PD opportunities from both the providers of the PD and recipients of the PD (i.e. teachers) they surveyed. Overall, respondents felt they had limited or no choice when it came to the PD they attended and often attended based on their supervisor's requirement or by "choos[ing] from the list of dates, but we all pretty much have to choose the same classes to get our necessary hours' (teacher, childcare center, Childcare Development Certificate, 21–25 years of experience)" (Linder, et al., p. 139). Limiting factors such as supervisor requirements or date and time constraints often left participants to attend PD based on accessibility rather than course content, as noted in Linder and colleague's (2016) findings. Because their participants described such a lack of access to high-quality PD experiences, Linder et al., (2016) suggested that PD requirements should be restructured to be based on recipient needs rather than focused on a prescribed set of topics.

Collectively these studies illuminate a gap within the research literature as it relates to investigating and working to understand teachers direct experiences engaging in PD opportunities, particularly those that foster and support effective teacher learning. Opportunities that could "allow for more nuanced views of teacher development and learning that speak to the complexities of practice" and to the teachers and center leaders own understandings and experiences of their perceived needs (Brown & Englehardt, 2016, p. 235).

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH

How Teachers Learn

Teacher learning is often unconscious, multidimensional and multi-level and takes place within a combination of practice, person and theory (Korthagen, 2017). Important within this understanding is recognizing the individual teacher as a being whom brings with them their own feelings and concerns based on their contextualized classroom experiences (Korthagen, 2017). By conceptualizing learning as situative (Putnam & Borko, 2000), it can be seen as offering "changes in participation in socially organized activities, and individuals' use of knowledge as an aspect of their participation in social practices" (Borko, 2004, p. 4). Teacher learning from a situated perspective "is usefully understood as a process of increasing participation in the practice of teaching, and through this participation, a process of becoming knowledgeable in and about teaching," (Adler, 2000, p. 37) whereby learning can then take place within classrooms, school communities, and PD opportunities (e.g., Greeno, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991). To understand teacher learning, Borko (2004) noted, "We must study it within these multiple contexts, taking into account both the individual teacher-learners and the social systems in which they are participants" (p. 4). Therefore, understanding how teachers learn is a complex and dynamic process (Hoban, 2005; Jörg, 2011).

Research is clear however, that traditional, short-term transmission or 'drive-by' workshop approaches to PD seem to contradict what is now known about the ways in which people learn (Stein, Smith, & Silver, 1999). Research has begun to create a consensus about key components needed for teacher learning within their PD experiences

(e.g., Hawley & Valli, 1999; Borko, 2004). For example, in their literature review of teacher learning, Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) noted that the research has shown that the content, context, and design all matter in creating more powerful PD experiences for teachers. Cobb (1994) also posited that "learning should be viewed as both a process of active individual construction and a process of enculturation into the . . . practices of wider society" (p. 13). Warford's (2011) theoretical work further conceptualized how Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development may offer insights into teacher learning within PD; particularly highlighting a more situated approach that sees "teaching and learning is a holistic, authentic approach that is consistent with whole language" rather than an accountability and skills based framing typically placed on PD (Warford, 2011, p. 252).

Darling-Hammond and Richardson's (2009) review of the literature also highlighted, similar to what has been articulated above, that the content of the PD should be centered on student learning; whereby, when teachers learn pedagogical skills needed to teach specific content, it can have positive effects on practice (Blank, de las Alas, & Smith, 2007; Wenglinsky, 2000). Additionally, PD opportunities should be integrated with overall school improvement and be contextualized. By integrating PD within an entire school context and over an extended period of time, rather than as an isolated training or workshop, increases what teachers are able to actually put into practice (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Darling-Hammond & Richardson (2009) further noted that research on effective PD has also highlighted "the importance of collaborative and collegial learning

environments that help develop communities of practice" which can " promote school change beyond individual classrooms" (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Hord, 1997; Knapp, 2003; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996) (p. 48). Therefore, PD should provide both active and hands-on experience and opportunity for sustained learning. Darling-Hammond & Richardson (2009) cite, Garet et al., (2001), Saxe et al., (2001), and Supovitz et al., (2000) whose combined worked has suggested that teachers need opportunities to see new strategies in practice through modeling as well as have opportunities to personally practice and reflect on new learnings from their PD experiences. Research from Cohen and Hill (2001), Garet et al., (2001), Supovitz, et al., (2000) and Weiss and Pasley (2006), has also pointed to the notion that teaching practices and student learning are more likely to be transformed by PD when it is sustained, coherent, and intense (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Combined, Darling-Hammond and Richardson's (2009) research of the literature on teacher learning and PD pointed to communities of practices (CoP) as being able to provide the sustained, job-embedded, and collaborative teacher learning strategies needed for effective and transformative PD and teacher learning.

In addition to CoPs, collaborative inquiry has been theorized to support teacher learning as a PD opportunity (Bray, 2002). For example, Mantilla & Kroll (2018) studied a yearlong partnership between a federally funded early education special education center and a local teaching scholars program (which builds partnerships between the local university and the community) to form a collaborative inquiry group. The goal of the teaching scholars program was to provide PD that "improves teachers' ability to work

together to improve classroom practice through capacity building in two important areas: learning to identify, collect, and use real-time classroom data, and developing the adult social emotional skills to engage in meaningful adult learning conversations" (p. 160). At the end of their year engagement, teachers expressed an appreciation for the opportunity for reflection and collaboration and the structure the inquiry work provided. Yet, teachers also desired for guest speakers to join based on findings surfacing from their inquiry work, as well as opportunities for their inquiry groups to include their para-educators in the process. Findings also highlighted a struggle that others have also found (e.g., Castle, 2012) that continuing to foster inquiry groups on an ongoing basis can be challenging. Particularly, once the official 'PD' support/partnership has ended or when there are staffing changes within leadership and/or amongst teaching teams as well. Mantilla & Kroll's (2018) work, while it highlighted many benefits to the teachers learning, it also depicted the strong level of support needed from administration to foster and support such inquiry practices. While teachers can and do (e.g., Meier & Sisk-Hilton, 2013) create their own inquiry groups, doing so requires the teachers themselves to put forth their own time and often their personal money/ resources to make it happen.

Snow-Gerono (2005) also conveyed learning's from six veteran teachers perspectives of a PD program that used a culture of inquiry. They posited that two key aspects, a shift to uncertainty and towards community were required to foster an environment supportive of inquiry based PD. These teachers noted the important role having space for dialogue was within their professional learning communities for fostering their PD and learning, which others have documented as well (e.g., Clark,

2001).

Combined the current research literature on teacher learning highlights that similar to understandings of how children learn (e.g., Dewey, 1998), as well as the ‘best practices’ of PD, teachers need ongoing opportunities to engage in dialogic learning that provides hands on experiences, builds upon their prior experiences, makes connections to their lived realities and that supports ongoing critical reflection, all of which point to IBPL practices.

INQUIRY-BASED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Defining IBPL

Inquiry-based professional learning (IBPL) allows teachers to critically question their own practices, ensure that the children, the classroom context and the communities in which they work, are included within their practices specifically, and creates space for dialogue. Dialogue with fellow teachers, directors, and/or teacher educators, which provides opportunities for teachers to think about how to incorporate theory into practice (Wood & Bennett, 2000). Moreover, IBPL provides opportunities for teachers to be driven by the needs of themselves as teachers, their children, families, or the larger communities in which they work (e.g., Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015; Riojas-Cortez, et al., 2013). Additionally, within IBPL, teachers can engage in critical reflection regarding their own practice and in questioning larger social justice issues (e.g., MacNaughton & Hughes, 2007; Nuttall, 2013; Taylor, 2013) or in challenging standards-based accountability reforms (e.g., Brown & Mowry, 2016; Brown & Weber, 2016).

Engaging in inquiry-based practices recognizes teachers as capable and competent learners who are able to engage in complex understandings and questioning of daily practices alongside theory over time. According to Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2009), engaging in inquiry enables teachers to "work from expanded rather than narrow views of teaching and learning" (p. 10). Teachers are able to work with complex knowledge, ask questions, co-construct curriculum, form relationships with students and parents, engage in collaboration with others, and pose and solve problems of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Furthermore, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) defined inquiry as:

> Problematizing the ends question. Practitioner researchers question the fundamental goals of teaching learning, and schooling: What purposes-besides academic achievement is indicated by test scores- are important in the schools? What about teaching toward the democratic ideal, deliberation and debate, and challenging inequities? … questions about power and authority: Who makes decisions about purposes and consequences? How do school structures, assessment regimes, and classroom practices challenge or sustain life chances? What part do practitioners play in broader social and intellectual movements? (p. 10)

Within this definition, Cochran-Smith and Lytle have called attention to the complexity of teaching in-and-of itself and proposition IBPL as a way to engage with this complexity. Suggesting a shift away from having clearly defined outcomes typically required of traditional PD (Sheridan, et al., 2009) to being okay and welcoming of the

unknown; challenging the taken for granted 'truths' of teaching, learning and schooling. Schools therefore become places for transformational change (Moss, 2014). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) suggest that there is more to teaching, learning and schooling than academic achievement and therefore propositioned inquiry as an entryway into seeing beyond the outcomes based neoliberal agenda.

IBPL therefore provides a framework to enable teachers and directors to question whether or not they are educating for a more democratic society that creates equitable opportunities for all children and families, as well as to question the 'normative' taken for granted 'truths' and 'best practices.' Inquiry opens up space for change to be transformative or as Moss (2014) highlighted, "a state of continuous movement: not the closure that comes from achieving a new and desired but static state of being, but the open-endedness of constant becoming" (p. 10). Change within PL should therefore be constant and viewed as ongoing, complex, multi-directional and requiring active participation and the knowledge of the individual teachers, children, families and communities in which they live and work (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al., 2015). IBPL provides space and time for teachers to engage in thinking and working in critical spaces that advocate for more "socially just and diverse ways of knowing, being, and doing" (Curry & Cannella, 2013, p. ix). When we shift PD towards IBPL, broader and 'holistic' approaches and reflections can be made towards creating 'quality' ECEC spaces that meet the needs of all children.

Mockler and Groundwater-Smith's (2015) work also highlighted how inquiry can be used to open up 'unwelcome truths.' Moving away from a predetermined end goal of

PD to an open-ended platform allows for more voices to be heard and, in turn, alternative viewpoints, ideas, and challenges to the 'norm.' Mockler & Groundwater-Smith (2015) sought to "interrupt the dominant discourse…that emphasize[s] the celebration of achievements" by giving voice to students and helping teachers go beyond the surface level (p. 21). By incorporating student voice, this resulted in creating space for "(real) development" as teachers engaged with both their own curiosities and student critiques, but combined offered opportunity for transformation through IBPL practices. Furthermore, teacher inquiry has been connected to notions of identity formation (Goodnough, 2011; McGregor, Hooker, Wise & Devlin 2010) student learning (Smith & Place, 2011) as well as PD (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002; Roberts, Crawford & Hickmann, 2010).

Key Attributes of IBPL

Figure 2.1 provides a summary of the key attributes of IBPL as defined through combining the inquiry research highlighted above and will be used within this research. While these key attributes provide an overview of various components of IBPL, programs do not need to be meeting all criteria to be participating in IBPL. Key to conceptualizing PL in this way is acknowledging that every program can and should enact their PL opportunities in ways that are relevant and meaningful to their particular context and local actors (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al., 2015). Furthermore, within programs that provide space for IBPL practices, it is expected that these programs will have an ongoing evolution of practices and change based on the context of the school, children,

families, and teachers as well as in response to larger societal influences. Meaning programs that engage in IBPL should be critically reflective of their PL practices and change them as needed. Additionally, many of these key attributes as defined in Figure 2.1, such as questioning taken for granted 'truths,' may take time to foster and develop the critical space and the opportunity for educators to be open to such critiques. In some cases, just adding teachers or children's voices to PL opportunities may be a big change to existing practices.

How is IBPL Different from Traditional PD

It is important to briefly highlight the important differences between traditional PD and IBPL. IBPL while nuanced in many ways, is foundationally similar to PD. IBPL however is more focused on critical reflection of existing practices whereby a focus can be placed on addressing the needs of not only the children, families and teachers, but also the larger communities in which they reside to ensure a more democratic and just society. Traditional PD tends to be more focused on improving teachers practices to ensure kids are "prepared" academically for their futures (Zaslow, et al., 2011). While this may also include a focus on social-emotional learning, or "the whole child" approaches typically advocated for in ECEC spaces, traditional PD often lacks true active and agentic participation from teachers themselves (Zaslow, et al., 2010). Meaning topics are normally given top down, and may focus more on imparting knowledge upon the teacher rather than working from the teacher's own curiosities, inquiries or insuring their own 'wisdom of practice' is integrated into the learning process and dialogue.

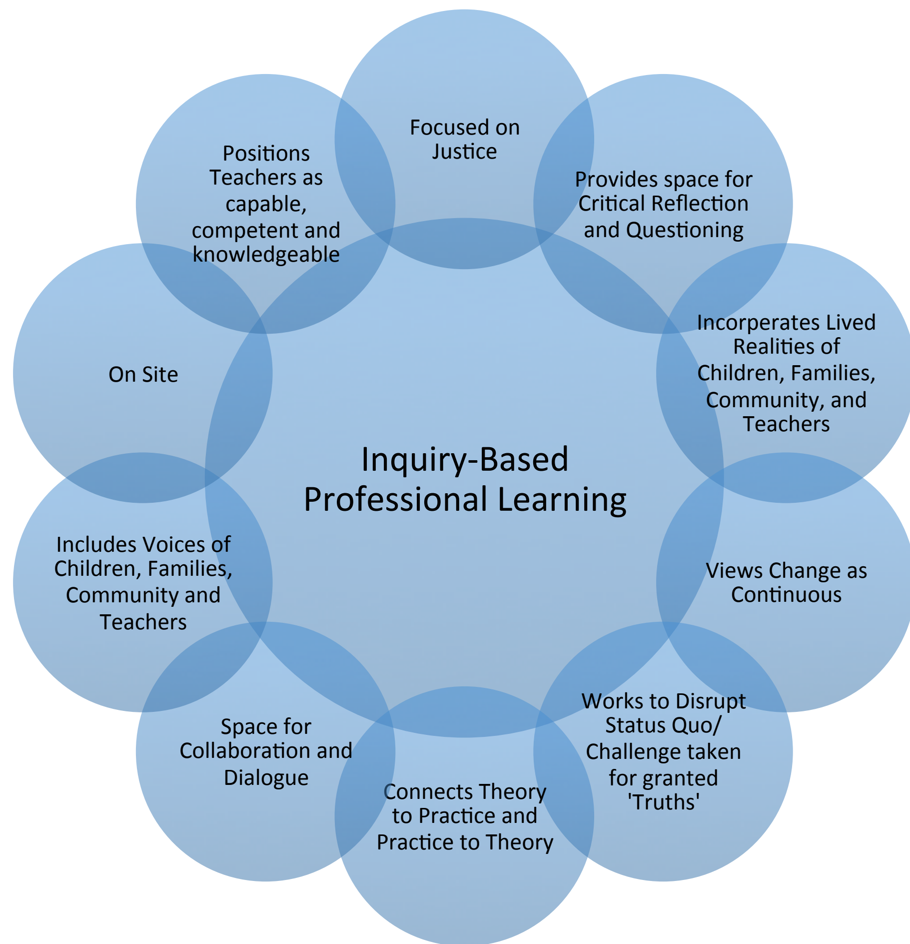


Figure 2.1. Key Attributes of Inquiry-Based Professional Learning

Different Types of IBPL

IBPL has taken on many identities within the research literature. All of which are closely related yet slightly nuanced as well. Each form places emphasis on collaboration and critical reflection and acknowledge teachers as able to pose questions worth exploring. Included in these various forms are reflective teaching/practice (e.g., Zeichner, 2008), teacher/practitioner research (e.g., Castle, 2012; Cochran-Smith & Lylte, 1993; 2009), communities of practice (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991), teacher inquiry (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lylte, 1999), learning circles (e.g., Moss & Pence, 1994; Pacini-

Ketchabaw, et al, 2015), professional learning communities, (e.g., DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Grossman, Wineberg, & Woolworth, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001) and critically knowing early childhood communities (Mac Naughton, 2005). Looking specifically within the ECEC literature for examples of PL taking on these various forms, I will briefly define these various types of inquiry.

Teacher/Practitioner Research

Teacher research (Cochran-Smith & Lylte, 1993; 2009; Meier & Henderson, 2007) has created spaces for teachers to play a more active role in their own professional development (Robert, et al., 2010), as well as further develop their teacher identities (Goodnough, 2011). Additionally, Flake, Kuhs, Donnelly, and Ebert (1995) pointed out that as teachers become researchers they become able to "take control of their own classrooms and professional lives" enabling them to move beyond traditional definitions of teacher and offer "proof that education can reform itself from within" (p. 407). Teacher research in ECEC continues to gain attention. For example, in 2004, *Voices of Practitioners*, an online journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), dedicated to early childhood teachers' systematic study of their own practices was created. In 2016, NAEYC began publishing one article from *Voices of Practitioners* in their *Young Children* publication as well. Additionally, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) now has a Teacher as Researcher Special Interest Group (SIG). Typically, teacher research tends to focus on teachers' own questions about and reflections on their everyday classroom practice by engaging in

intentional and systematic inquiry working towards improving the lives of children (Cochran-Smith & Lytle 1993; 1999). Teacher research is therefore a type of self-study into teacher's own practices (Meir & Henderson, 2007).

Community of Practice

Coming from the work of Wenger (1990; 1998) and Lave and Wenger (1991), communities of practice (CoP) frames learning and knowledge as socially created and situated. It is within these social spaces where teachers collectively reflect and dialogue about their practices, and enable them to reconstruct their beliefs about learning and practice (Wood & Bennett, 2000). Riojas-Cortez and colleague's (2013) work is an example of a research project that used a CoP to engage a cohort of teachers enrolled in a Master's program as they worked to reconstruct their beliefs and practices about teaching and learning. The teachers were asked to use reflection and ongoing dialogue to bridge theory and practice as they questioned their daily practices in relation to theoretical perspectives. Riojas-Cortez and colleges (2013) found that by engaging in a CoP, the teachers in their study were able to discover differences between their beliefs and their practices. Then, within the space provided by the CoP, these teachers grappled with the inconsistencies and worked to transform their practices. This research highlights the need for time and space for teachers to engage in critical dialogue that not only explores theory, but also enables teachers to critically reflect on their actual teaching practices in relation to theory.

Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities (PLC), while originating from the elementary level, have also made their way into ECEC spaces (e.g., Graue, Whyte, and Delaney, 2014; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Grossman, et al., 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Hipp and Huffman (2010) defined PLC as “professional educators working collectively and purposefully to create and sustain a culture of learning for all students and adults” (p. 12). Cherrington and Thornton (2015) found through their investigation of a PLC in New Zealand that the characteristics of effective early childhood PLC’s were similar to those within K-12 grades. Graue, Whyte, and Delaney (2014), for example, were interested in supporting teachers to develop more developmentally and culturally responsive teaching in early mathematics with 4-year-olds. They found that through their PD experiences and use of learning stories, teachers abilities to enact the elements of the PD (funds of knowledge, developmentally responsive practices and early math) varied based on teachers’ abilities to improvise in their teaching and to incorporate children’s interests and resources in meaningful ways. The PCL in this case created the opportunity for teachers within their study to engage with a teacher educator as well as reflect in a group setting on their learning stories overtime as they explored these topics. This research highlights the complexity and process of IBPL. Ongoing IBPL, such as a PLC, open opportunities for teachers to engage in conversation with others surrounding particular theoretical topics, such as Graue, and colleague’s inquiry into funds of knowledge and early math.

Learning Circles

Similar to PLC, are learning circles where teacher educators engage in more critical conversations with teachers in ECEC IBPL spaces (e.g., Mac Naughton, 2005; Moss & Pence, 1994). Pacini-Ketchabaw, and colleagues (2015) highlighted how engaging in "an ethic of resistance" or learning circles can create spaces for teachers to "deconstruct…what [they] know to be true… [and] create new ways of seeing, understanding and working with children" (p. 54). Whereby within learning circles, teachers are able to resist and rework dominant discourses that may be influencing their current lived realities. Learning circles often use post-foundational theories as they work to deconstruct taken for granted 'truths' and approach PD from a more critical perspective.

Critical Learning Communities

Similar to both learning circles and PLC, critical learning communities are another type of IBPL. van Keulen's (2010) action research study of a critical learning community found that reflection, critical reflection and constructive feedback were all key components in the learning process towards sustainable change within childcare programs (p. 107). The researcher's goal was twofold; to 'improve quality' and to enable the educators to not only create but also to sustain their own critical learning community once the researcher left. They found that sustainable change in programs and learning processes with teachers can be realized through the use of team coaching and sufficient time for reflection. Here they used the notion of "critical friend" (vanKeulen, 2010, p. 109) to allow teachers the space to support and learn from each other.

Action Research

In addition, action research IBPL (e.g., Han & Thomas, 2010) also creates opportunities for researchers to take an active role in working through the hard task of helping teachers reflect upon dominate discourses and the "power structures of the larger society" that unconsciously govern teachers (Han & Thomas, 2010, p. 474). Action research often encompasses notions from above as an inquiry method. For example, as was seen above, van Keulen's (2010) study was an action research study that used a critical learning community. Taylor (2013) used action research in her work with educators and highlighted how collective storytelling could be a way to 'understand the self, others and teaching differently.' Unlike much of the other research on PD, Taylor (2013) noted that, "professional learning is less about answers and fixed transferrable knowledge, and more about posing problems, engaging in debate, and seeking multiple and marginalized perspectives" (p. 10). Her work positioned PD as a process of learning rather than development and therefore inline with IBPL practices. This simple change in word seems to position the goals of PD towards a non-linear notion of change within her research, as is common within inquiry framing of PL. Most published inquiry studies tend to stem from action research with the exception of teacher research (e.g., Thomas, 2018), whereby the researcher is typically the teacher as well as researcher.

Challenges to Implementation of IBPL

While these various types of IBPL illuminate the potential for PD to move beyond single day technocratic-based opportunities, these inquiry forms of PD are not without their challenges. For example, no longitudinal studies have been done as of yet within the

U.S. context to show how sustainable these practices can be over time (Sheridan, et al., 2009). Welch-Ross, Wolf, Moorehouse, and Rathgeb (2006) additionally pointed towards a need for explorations into the efficacy of these IBPL programs and call for a cost-benefit ratio to inform both practice and policy (Sheridan, et al, 2009, p. 395).

Still, as Zaslow (2010) noted, there is a disconnect between the current strategies of PD and the ability to effectively prepare all teachers for the varied responsibilities, knowledge, and skills needed to work with such diverse children and families. Additionally, these various IBPL practices all require large amounts of time for teachers (Castle, 2016). Time which can be hard to find, especially in ECEC settings that operate full day hours of 7am-6pm, or longer. Even more so is the fact that finding resources to pay for teachers to engage in this work, along with paying for other support staff can be costly. Not all programs have the means necessary to enact IBPL practices. Additionally, a lack of support from directors/institutions (i.e. Head Start programs) can also hinder the implementation of inquiry practices (Castle, 2016). While studies have begun to document and research how various programs are implementing such IBPL opportunities (e.g., Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016; Hodgins & Kummen, 2018; Kroll & Meier, 2018; Kummen & Hodgins, 2019), little research has been done to gain insights into how teachers and center leaders themselves make sense of such practices.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SENSEMAKING

The focus of this study therefore was to address this gap and gain insights into how center leaders and teachers within three different ECEC programs made sense of and

described their experiences engaging in various forms of PL and IBPL specifically. To study this, I employed the process of sensemaking as outlined by Coburn (2001), Dorner (2012), Erickson (2014), Weick (2004) and others (e.g., Lipksy, 1980) as my conceptual framework for this research. Sensemaking has been used across a variety of fields for research from the educational settings (e.g., Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Rom & Eyal, 2019) to organizational and management studies (e.g., Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Across these varying settings, a variety of understandings, definitions and applications have been used (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Generally speaking however, sensemaking can be defined as a "cognitive act of taking in information, framing it, and using it to determine actions and behaviors in a way that manages meaning for individuals" (Evans, 2007, p. 159). Weick (1994) further asserted that sensemaking is ultimately about 'identity construction.' Whereby identity is conceptualized as a "persons' perceptions of how others view them or their organization" or in this particular case, their PL experiences (Evans, 2007, p. 163).

However, sensemaking has also been theorized to be heavily influenced by the context and the situated learning and interactions that take place within those contexts (Dorner, 2012). Therefore, sensemaking is both a cognitive and emotional process (Coburn, 2004; Luttenberg, Van Veen, & Imants, 2013; Schmidt & Datnow, 2005; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002; Van Veen & Lasky, 2005). It is the social reality of a person's lived experiences and captures "the realities of agency, flow, equivocality, transience, re-accomplishment, unfolding, and emergence of realities…often obscured by the language of variables, nouns, quantities, and structures" (Weick, Sutcliffe, &

Obstfeld, 2005, p. 410). Sensemaking consequently is not static; it develops over time and within varying contexts (Dorner, 2012). Yet, it also creates space to label and categorize information to "stabilize the streaming of experience" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 411). By offering the opportunity for people to begin to understand and fill cognitive gaps, particularly in spaces of ambiguity, meaning can be derived and action can be taken (Rom & Eyal, 2019; Weick, 1995). It is within small moments, experiences, or one's sensmaking that one comes to understand and explain both their current experiences but will also influence their conceptualizations of their future actions as well. For as Weik, Sutcliff, and Obstfeld (2005) noted, "smallness does not equate with insignificance" but rather "short moments can have large consequences" (p. 410). It is within these everyday experiences and understandings that influence and predict how and in what ways people will choose not only to respond immediately but what actions they will take in the future in response.

Thus, sensemaking not only influences how people interpret the world around them, "what they perceive to be real" but also helps explain the variety of "interpretations to the same events" (Rom & Eyal, 2019, p. 63). Nevertheless, because sensemaking is "social, retrospective, grounded on identity, narrative, and enactive" one's own individual life experiences and current contextual factors as well as social and professional pressures and/or policies all influence ones sensemaking (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2014, p. 9). Sensemaking then creates "the ability to bound the continuous flow of human experience" or to understand, conceptualize and make meaning within situations, past, current and future (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2014, p. 9).

Sensemaking therefore has also been theorized as "a constructive practice, which includes how people concerned with identity in the social context of other actors engage in ongoing events from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively while enacting more or less order into those ongoing events" (Weick, 2001, p. 463). To do this, a person focuses on the "salient cues of an unfolding situation" and crafts them into "a plausible narrative for what is going on" (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2014, p. 9). This "narrative" is what then becomes the current understanding and conceptualization of a particular experience or in the case of educational studies, a PD experience or an overall policy change. Here, within this study in particular, teachers and center leaders share their "narratives" of their current engagements in PL and IBPL through the combined cultivation of their current, past, and conceptualized understandings and experiences in PL and ECEC in general.

A sensemaking framework has been used specifically by educational researchers to understand how teachers and/or administrators have enacted and conceptualized things such as policy reform (e.g., Ketelaar, Beijaard, Boshuizen, & Den Brok, 2012), PD opportunities (e.g., Allen & Penuel, 2015), student performance data (e.g., Bertrand & Marsh, 2015), or issues of gender and race (e.g., Evans, 2007; Grisoni & Beeby, 2007). Within these situations, sensemaking was used as a theoretical framework to create opportunity to understand how teachers and/or administrators not only "notice(d), select(ed), and interpret(ed) ideas" but also how they enacted and derived meaning from their experiences and in turn whether or not changes within their practices or beliefs were made in response (Rom & Eyal, 2019, p. 63). Furthermore, using a sensemaking

framework also allowed as Spillane et al. (2002) and Coburn (2001) posited to maintain and articulate the unique worldviews and experiences of the individual teachers and leaders. Particularly important when working towards understanding how and why changes are made within educational settings, to include the voices and understandings of those directly responsible for implementing the change.

Building upon organizational theories, a sense making framework offers a useful framework for analyzing teachers' responses to PD specifically because as Allen and Penel (2015) noted, "PD activities create new and foreground existing sources of ambiguity and uncertainty for teachers in their organizational environment" (p. 137). Teachers and center leaders "social identity" and in turn their sensemaking are therefore impacted by various "policies" and professional experiences (Dorner, 2012). These include but are not limited to, their prior PL experiences, past working environments, educational experiences, in addition to their current work context and PL experiences. The teachers and center leaders within this study will have utilized a combination of their own personal "identities" which have been and continue to be influenced by their past, current and future experiences both within their PL experiences directly as well as their classroom, community and educational experiences and will shape how they came to make sense of and articulate their PL experiences.

By coming to understand how teachers and center leaders made sense of their PL and IBPL experiences, the "short moments" not only capture their personal experiences and understandings, but highlight how these individual experiences can collectively help to further foster IBPL practices within more ECEC spaces and "connect the abstract with

the concrete” (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 412).

Conclusions

Within this literature review, I have explored four main strands of literature that pertain to my research questions; PD in ECEC, critical understandings of PD in ECEC, teacher development research, and IBPL in ECEC. First, by examining how the notion of PD in ECEC is articulated and defined within the research literature, we come to see how PD has traditionally been offered as a way to provide on-going ‘training’ with a goal of improving program ‘quality’ and student outcomes. Typically this is done within a neoliberal framing whereby teachers are to be ‘trained’ within a transmission model from the expert to the novice to ‘ready’ children for their futures. Current ‘best practices’ in ECEC PD literature however advocate for more collaborative approaches to PL that can offer more ‘inside-out’ sharing of knowledge and collaborative learning environments.

Yet, from the second strand of literature, the critical understandings of PD in ECEC, we see how single day PD opportunities continue to be the ‘norm’ despite the research and ‘best practices’, which advocate against such practices. These ‘training’ opportunities further emphasize the significant role placing expert knowledge above teachers can have on the positioning of teachers. Drawing attention to a need for an alternative view of teachers as researchers, and as becomings in the constant state of learning. Positioning teachers in this way helps to identify how IBPL opportunities that not only acknowledge the various wisdoms of teachers but also privileges them can support teachers learning.

Next, the research surrounding how teachers learn was explored. By understanding what is known about how teachers learn helps to inform what types of PD are needed. By calling attention specifically to the complexity in the learning process this literature expressed a need for teachers to play a more active role in their own PD. Whereby, teachers should be able to pose and explore issues directly related to their specific teaching environments. Ongoing and collaborative COP were offered as ways to provide space for transformative changes and teachers learning.

Fourth, I explored and defined the various types of IBPL within ECEC spaces to illuminate how my notion of ongoing IBPL has been influenced by these different framings and can work to address PD needs in ECEC. These different forms highlight that there is not ‘one way’ to enact IBPL, but rather key components that can help to foster learning environments that can both challenge and support teachers in being critically reflective of their teaching practices and in questioning taken for granted ‘truths’ and better meet the needs of all children

Combined, these four strands of literature called attention to the gap in our understanding of how teachers and center leaders make sense of their engagements in IBPL practices. Therefore, I ended the chapter with an outline of the framework that will support my research, sensemaking (Coburn, 2001; Dorner, 2012; Erickson, 2014; Weick, 2004).

METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the methods I used to conduct my qualitative instrumental multiple case study (Stake, 2005). I first begin the chapter with a general overview of my research interest and the connection to the methods selected. I then list the research questions that guided this study. Next, I provide theoretical understanding as to why qualitative research best addressed my research questions. This is followed by a description of case study, multiple case study, and instrumental case study, to illuminate the connection and significance of my cases. I then provide insight into my particular cases, my issue, and my participants. I outline my data sources and data collection processes which are followed by the techniques I used to analyze my data. Next, I outline the methods I used to establish credibility. I conclude by discussing the limitations of my methods which include my own researcher bias.

Instrumental Multiple Case Study

For this study, I examined how center leaders and teachers in three preschool/childcare programs engaged in professional learning (PL) and inquiry-based professional learning (IBPL) specifically. I was interested in understanding their daily experiences and wanted to understand the deeper aspects of center leaders' and teachers' engagement as well as the development of PL, which quantitative data could not adequately illuminate. I wanted access to the thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of their

lived realities as center leaders and teachers, specifically as it pertained to their professional learning encounters. This research allowed me to gain insight into the various worlds of center leaders and teachers particularly as it related to the issue of engaging in ongoing IBPL specifically. To address this, I highlight entry points that may be supporting ongoing inquiry center based PD in three centers to support future engagement by other programs. Thus, to conduct such a study, I employed a qualitative instrumental multiple case study (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014) and examined the following research questions:

1) How do school leaders and teachers make sense of PL in general and their experiences within them and their school community?

2) How do school leaders and teachers make sense of IBPL specifically and their experiences within them and their school community?

Qualitative Research

As Merriam (2009) noted, qualitative research enables researchers to gain insight into "how people make sense of their world" and their experiences (p. 13). She identified four major attributes of qualitative research: a focus on meaning and understanding, the researcher as primary instrument, an inductive process, and providing rich description. By placing a focus on meaning and understanding, qualitative research allows researchers to come to understand participants' perspectives and understandings of the topic at hand. In my particular case study, my participants were center leaders and teachers. I wanted to learn about their perspectives and understandings of implementing and/or engaging in PL

and IBPL specifically. Because I, as the researcher, was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, it allowed me to humanize the data and for both verbal and non-verbal data to be collected. For example, by conducting semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 2009) with the center leaders and teachers, I gained insight into their worlds because the open-ended nature of the semi-structured interviews created opportunities for both the center leaders' and teachers' to share their overt and covert conceptualizations of PL and their understandings in regards to ongoing IBPL specifically.

Furthermore, because of the inductive nature of qualitative research, themes emerged as data were collected. Unlike quantitative research, which is deductive in nature, qualitative research does not set out to prove or disprove but rather to understand a concept/problem more fully (Merriam, 2009). Rich descriptions, with words and pictures as opposed to numbers, are used to paint the picture of the context, participants, and activities, with direct quotes providing additional data that helps to illuminate and support themes found (Merriam, 2009).

These major characteristics supported my engagement in a multiple case study methodology and provided an empirical strategy to examine the lived realities of how center leaders support their teachers' PL and how teachers understand these enactments. Additionally it allowed access into center leaders conceptualizations of how they implement ongoing IBPL and the resources needed to foster such environments and/or barriers that they have had to overcome or continue to face to do so.

In addition to allowing for rich descriptions through inductive processes, qualitative research has been "developed out of interest in the lives and perspectives of

people in society who had little or no voice" (Erickson, 1986, p. 4). I was very interested in the voices of both center leaders and teachers in early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs; voices typically not heard in the research literature or in the process of policy making. Center leaders, specifically, often play a 'middleman' role within ECEC programs - meaning they are often responsible for holding teachers accountable for implementation of various rules and regulations that they had no say in creating. Additionally, the teachers themselves are often left out of these conversations. Therefore, to qualitatively give life to these center leaders' and teachers' voices, I conducted a multiple case study.

CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Stake (2005) defined a case as a specific, complex functioning thing, a bounded system that has working parts. Cases can be used as an arena, host or fulcrum to bring many functions and relationships together for study. Therefore, according to Stake (2005), case study allows space for issues to be reflective of the complex, situated, with often problematic relationships found within each context. Case study investigates a "bounded system" allowing the researcher to come know its inner workings (Stake, 2005). By examining "a special something to be studied…something that we do not sufficiently understand and want to," we gain insight into this bounded system (Stake, 2005, p. 133). Furthermore, case study allows the researcher to make analytical claims.

I was interested in learning more conceptually and pragmatically about the construct of IBPL. Specifically, I was interested in how center leaders' foster

environments within their programs that support IBPL and how teachers make sense of engaging in such practices. I investigated these issues within my three cases so that I could make analytical claims regarding how IBPL might be implemented in other ECEC settings. To gain insight into their conceptualizations, I worked from my etic (outside) questions through conversation and investigation into the cases to get at emic (inside) issues that emerged from my participants (Stake, 2005). Through this questioning, I gained understanding into the center leaders' and teachers' understandings and experiences of engaging and enacting IBPL, the barriers faced in implementation, and other issues beyond my original thinking of this issue. It was therefore important that, as Stake (2005) contended, to be flexible with my framing of the issue under investigation to accommodate for the emerging emic issues. As such, I progressively redefined my issue as I collected and analyzed the data I gathered and I seized opportunities to learn from the unexpected and my participants (Stake, 2005). For example, while I was originally interested in learning specifically from programs engaging in IBPL, through my data collection process, I came to find that while the three cases were engaging in varying components of IBPL, there were key aspects missing from these engagements. Therefore, by expanding my original research questions to include PL in general, insights were gained into how and in what ways the teachers and center leaders conceptualized IB components within their understandings of PL in general (if at all).

MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

Specifically, I conducted a multiple case study (Yin, 2014). I chose a multiple

case study because the field of ECEC is vast and diverse. From private programs, for-profit and non-profit, federally funded to state funded, parent co-operatives and in-home, the field is complex. Additionally, making the field even more complicated is the fact that there are full-day programs and part-day programs. All of these varying types of programs may face differing licensing regulations, have unique needs and face distinctive fiscal and bureaucratic constraints. Furthermore, because there are no universal federal regulations in regards to childcare programs, each state implements and enforces their own regulations, furthering this complexity. Therefore, the cases of my study consisted of three different types of programs implementing some form of IBPL: private part-day, full-day private for-profit, and full-day private non-profit attached to a state university campus.

Yin (2014) posited that by following a replication design, a multiple case study can be considered more robust. Whereby, there can be either literal replication, where similar results are expected to be found across the cases, or a theoretical replication, where contrasting results are expected to be found across the cases for predictable reasons (Yin, 2014). Multiple case studies typically provide theoretical replication. Theoretically, I was interested in understanding how center leaders' and teachers' made sense of their engagement in PL in general and IBPL specifically. As such, my research used replication to look for the theoretical factors that I predicted would have different influences on directors and their implementation and engagement with ongoing inquiry professional development (Yin, 2014).

It was because I predicted contrasting results due to the differing contexts and the

influencing factors within the purposefully selected (Yin, 2014) cases that I was able to illuminate theoretical replication. Meaning that between the subcases (Yin, 2014) of centers (private for-profit full-day, private non-profit full-day and private for-profit part-day) in two states (Texas and California), I predicted that different factors (such as organizational regulations, accreditation requirements, as well as differing state regulations and constraints) would influence the implementation of PL and teachers' and directors' sensemaking of engaging in those practices. The theoretical assumption was that within the three different types of programs, the overarching governing bodies would influence the teachers' and directors' sensemaking of PL in different ways. Additionally, within the two states, California and Texas, differing state regulations would also guide their sensemaking as well. For example, center leaders and teachers in both states have to adhere to different licensing regulations/requirements, which influence what types of PL programs are offered and/or required of their teachers to participate in. However, I also expected differences between the two states because they implement and follow different frameworks for their K-12 system. California implements the Common Core and Texas uses the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), these different sets of standards may be driving differences in ECEC curriculum implementation and/or in the ways teachers are 'readying' children for kindergarten and beyond. These standards, Common Core in California and TEKS in Texas, while similar in many ways may still influence the types of PL teachers engage in and the types of PL directors require their teachers to participate in.

Although I expected to find both literal and theoretical replications within the

cases, I was most interested in theoretical replications because they foster opportunities to think about the contextual differences and influences impacting center leaders, and in return, teachers engagement in PL and IBPL specifically. Especially when looking across the varying types of programs (full-day private for-profit, full-day private non-profit, to half-day private for-profit), these theoretical differences further illuminate the complexity influencing the current state of ECEC in the US.

INSTRUMENTAL CASE STUDY

Within case study methodology, Stake (2005) further distinguished between two types of case studies, instrumental and intrinsic cases. I conducted an instrumental case study because as Stake (2005) posited, instrumental case studies start and end with issues. While the case is looked at within an instrumental case study, it serves mainly as a frame for viewing the issue(s) within. By conducting an instrumental case study, I was, as Stake (2005) articulated, interested in "what can be learned…that a reader needs to know" (p. 449). Issues are "complex, situated, problematic relationships" and illuminate the purpose of the study, which for this study was ongoing IBPL (p. 448).

ECEC is of current interest to many stakeholders due to increased enrollment and usage (e.g., Barnett, et al., 2009) as well as research illuminating the benefits of high quality early learning experiences for children (e.g., Barnett, 1995; Campbell, et al., 2014; Early Child Care, 2002). Furthermore, a heightened focus has been placed on PL as a way to increase program quality in a field that has historically had limited teacher qualifications. In addition, research has also posed inquiry learning as a professional

learning strategy (e.g., Wood & Bennett, 2000) and an effective way to support teachers in being critically reflective in their work. Yet, not all centers are implementing ongoing inquiry opportunities due to challenges such as lack of time and lack of administrative/institutional support (Castle, 2016). By using a qualitative instrumental multiple case study, I gained insight into the issue of center leaders' and teachers' experiences engaging in ongoing IBPL. Through the analysis of these three programs, I learned from these cases how center leaders and teachers make sense of implementing and engaging in PL and ongoing inquiry opportunities specifically.

THE CASES

To do this, I had three cases, two in Texas (TX) and one in California (CA). Each ECEC program (each case) was bounded by the individual site; meaning that each specific center/program, even if part of a larger organization (such as the Red School), was the case and not the larger organization. All programs were licensed by their state's licensing agency but no other regulations were placed beyond the criteria of engaging in some form of IBPL (see figure 2.1 for key components). All were ECEC programs that served a range of children from infancy through five years. The three cases were therefore purposefully selected (Merriam, 2009) for their engagement in IBPL and provided insight into various enactments of such practices.

Case Selection

Several steps were taken in order to find sites engaging in IBPL. First, those connected to a large number of ECEC programs in TX and CA were contacted.

Specifically, former and current colleagues, local NAEYC affiliated organizations, and professors of Early Childhood in TX and CA were contacted. These initial points of contact were asked to share an email inquiry with their ECEC contacts (see Appendix A for the e-mail inquiry that was sent). This email was purposefully vague in not defining IBPL and merely inquired about programs that were providing PL onsite. This was intentional to allow programs to describe their PL without any researcher influence.

In response to the inquiry email to various ECEC programs in CA and TX, I spoke and/or met with 10 center leaders. From those 10 initial respondents, I selected three programs whose PL was in alignment with some of the key aspects of IBPL I was looking for (see figure 2.1). The three selected cases, the Blue School, the Yellow School and the Red School (all names used in this research are pseudonyms) were providing PL that: happened onsite; was ongoing; provided space for teacher agency/voice and collaboration; positioned teachers as capable and competent; and viewed change as continuous (see figure 3.1).

Key Characteristics of Inquiry-Based PL	Red School	Yellow School	Blue School
Positions teachers as capable, competent and knowledgeable	YES	YES	YES
PD driven by and respectful of the needs and voices of teachers, children, families, and the larger communities in which they work	NO	YES	YES
Opportunity to critically reflect, question, critique and share their various expertise, experiences, and teaching practices	YES	YES	YES
Time and space for dialogue and collaboration with fellow teachers, directors, and/or teacher educators	YES	YES	YES
Examine current research, connect theory to practice	NO	YES	NO
Address lived realities of current working environment	YES	YES	YES
Opportunity to disrupt status quo and rethink and challenge taken-for-granted 'truths'	NO	NO	YES
Address issues of injustice, larger systemic issues and work towards a more democratic society for all	NO	NO	YES
Ongoing change valued	YES	YES	YES

Figure 3.1 Enactments of Inquiry Key Characteristics Within Each Case

The Blue School

Case number one, the Blue School, was a full day preschool located in California and offered year-round care Monday through Friday, 7:30am-6:00pm. Their mission was to "provide the highest quality early childhood education for the children in their care in a safe, loving, respectful environment so children can freely explore their world" (the Blue School website). They believed that "children learn through play and in relationships"

and from “inquiries and explorations” and followed a Reggio-Inspired play-based curriculum. Through documentation and ongoing reflection, their curriculum was emergent, created in dialogue with children and families, and allowed for inquiry and connection. They served children five months to five years of age and had five classrooms.

All teachers were considered to be ‘equals’ as there was no hierarchy or differentiation between teachers such as lead or assistant teachers. Teachers were provided with weekly 1.5 hour staff meetings that included 45 minutes of collaborative inquiry with their age group (either infant/toddler or preschool). Teachers were also each provided one-hour of office time (time to work on lesson planning/reflections, portfolios, professional growth, communication with families) and one-hour for partner meetings each week (collaboration with co-teacher). Bimonthly, they had an all-staff meeting after school that lasted one and a half hours. The leadership team (directors, pedagogista and family coordinator) met bi-weekly for one-hour as well. Additionally, the Blue School closed one week during the summer, and three additional days throughout the school year for annual teacher in-service- which was teacher-identified and teacher-led; teachers contributed both to the topics as well as the content presented during those days. There were no licensing regulations in CA for requiring continuing PD.

The Yellow School

Case number two, the Yellow School, was a half-day, private preschool program “nurturing and teaching young children” from 18 months to 5 years of age located in

Texas that was accredited by the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC) (Yellow School website). They followed a play-based philosophy that emphasized hands on learning and experiences "based on best practices in the early childhood field and individualized to respond to children's developmental levels" (Yellow School website). Following emergent curriculum, teachers planned activities based on both their children's development levels as well as their interests. They emphasized process over product, open-ended activities, and fostered both teacher and child directed learning activities. Inquiry as a stance towards their work with children was not explicitly expressed nor observed. The Yellow School offered two, three, or five days per week availability for children and was a year-round school open from 8:30-12:30pm. An optional "Nap & Snack" until 3:00pm was offered as well. Children who stay for "Nap & Snack" combine to nap from 12:30-2:30pm and then have a snack once they wake prior to going home. Teachers rotate to cover this classroom. The school had been in operation for seven years and had a total of six classrooms. Teachers were required to engage in 30 hours annually of PL to maintain their NAC accreditation status as well as maintain state licensing compliance. Teachers at the Yellow School were given seven and a half hours per week of paid time when children were not there, which included staff meetings, trainings, and article reading/discussions.

The Red School

Case number three, the Red School, was one of three childcare programs servicing students, faculty, and staff year round at a Texas public university campus.

Accredited by the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC), they offered a “developmental early childhood program” for children six weeks to five years of age, which created “a nurturing, age-appropriate learning environment.” Teachers therefore planned activities and arranged the learning environments based on the different developmental stages of the children and provided a mix of child and teacher initiated activities within a play-based environment (Red School website). Inquiry as a stance towards their work with children was not explicitly expressed nor observed. The Red School offered care Monday through Friday from 7:15am to 6:00pm. Lead, assistant, and floater teachers were required to engage in 30 hours each year of PL to maintain their accreditation status as well as stay within compliance with their state licensing regulations. To meet these requirements, the Red School offered monthly “Lunch-n-Learns.” These monthly “Lunch-n-Learns” were lead by the Curriculum Coordinator (CC) who developed trainings based on teachers’ annual professional development plans, which were created in concert with the site director during their annual performance evaluations. Additionally, the Red School closed two days per year for annual staff development days. During these two days the Red School joined with the other two schools on their University campus for trainings. Additionally, the Red School held monthly staff meetings that were held during the lunch hours 12-1 and 1-2. Whereby there was a lead teacher lunch meeting from 12-1 and an assistant teacher lunch meeting from 1-2.

Participants

A total of 59 teachers and administrators were observed during their PL engagements (see Table 3.1 for a list of participants), 23 of which participated in semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B for interview protocol) (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The teachers and center leaders who participated in the interviews were purposefully selected in partnership with the center directors to provide a range of education, years experience and tenure at their current center. Interviews at each school were conducted until saturation was achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Of the 23 selected, 19 were teachers and 4 were directors: six teachers and one director from the Blue School, six teachers and one director from the Yellow School, and five teachers, one curriculum specialist, one assistant director, one director and one executive director from the Red School.

Table 3.1: The Participants (all names are pseudonyms)

Name:	Gender:	Cultural Identity:	Education:	School:	Years Experience (At Center /In Total)	Position:
Nora*	Female	African American Black	BA Anthropology/12 ECE Units	Blue	8 years / 10 years	Coordinator and Teacher
Taylor *	Female	Black Woman	Currently enrolled in Community College	Blue	4 years/ 4 years	Teacher
Zoe*	Female	Mexican American	Masters ECE	Blue	2 years/ 15 years	Teacher
Holly*	Female	European Mix-half Portuguese and half white	BA Liberal Studies, emphasis in education	Blue	1 year/ 20 years off-and-on	Teacher
Eva *	Female	American	Masters ECE	Blue	14 years/ 16 years	Pedagogista and Teacher
Megan *	Female	White	Masters ECE, Currently enrolled in EED ECE program	Blue	22 years/ 22 years	Co-Director

Table 3.1 (Continued): The Participants (all names are pseudonyms)

Amelie*	Female	Filipino and White	BA English, minor studio arts/12 ECE units	Blue	3 years/ 3 years	Teacher
Ashlyn*	Female	White	MA Early Childhood Special Education	Red	4 years/ 42 years	Curriculum Coordinator
Sage*	Female	White Jewish mother	MA ECE	Red	26 years/ 30 years	Executive Director
Justice*	Female	Hispanic-Really more American	Associate ECE, Working on BA in Human Development and Family Studies	Red	10 years/ 19 years	Lead Teacher
Ulises*	Male	Mexican America	BA Social Work		8 years/ 10 years	Lead Teacher
Veronica*	Female	Austinite Texan	BA Child Development and Diversity	Red	2 years/ 32 years	Lead Teacher
Grace*	Female	Caucasian-White	Currently enrolled in Teacher Trak at Community College	Red	15 years/ 15 years	Lead Teacher
Gabi*	Female	Hispanic	Currently enrolled in Teacher Trak at Community College	Red	90 days/ 3 years	Assistant Teacher
Olivia*	Female	Caucasian-White	BA CD- Currently enrolled in Masters program	Red	7 years/ 24 years	Director
Celia*	Female	Black, African American	BA Business Administration, AA ECE	Red	2 years/ 20 plus years	Assistant Director
Lilian*	Female	½ Hispanic/ ½ White	BA English	Yellow	7 years/ 24 years	Lead Teacher
Jessica*	Female	White/ Caucasian	BA Communications	Yellow	8 months/ 15 years	Assistant Teacher
Jennifer*	Female	Caucasian	PhD ECE	Yellow	7 Years/ 33 Years	Director/Owner
Faith*	Female	White/Caucasian	Masters ECE	Yellow	2 years/ 4 years	Assistant Teacher
Annabelle*	Female	Caucasian	CDA	Yellow	4 years/ 20 years	Lead Teacher
Leslie*	Female	White	High School Diploma	Yellow	2 years/ 43 years	Assistant Teacher
Leslie*	Female	Human being/4th generation American	BA Human Development	Yellow	7 years/ 30 years	Lead Teacher
Elliot	Female			Blue		
Jill	Female			Blue		
Astrid	Female			Blue		
Chloe	Female			Blue		
Candace	Female			Blue		
Gary	Male			Blue		

Table 3.1 (Continued): The Participants (all names are pseudonyms)

Gemma	Female	Blue
Raven	Female	Blue
Alice	Female	Blue
Eulalia	Female	Blue
Martha	Female	Blue
Elizabeth	Female	Blue
Clementin	Female	Blue
Mary	Female	Blue
Rhonwen	Female	Red
Eliza	Female	Red
Angela	Female	Red
Jean	Female	Red
Susannah	Female	Red
Genevieve	Female	Red
Payton	Female	Red
Valeria	Female	Red
Macy	Female	Red
Flora	Female	Red
Evangeline	Female	Red
Harriet	Female	Yellow
Charlotte	Female	Yellow
Zahara	Female	Yellow
Natalie	Female	Yellow
Lucia	Female	Yellow
Kennedy	Female	Yellow
Neima	Female	Yellow
Jane	Female	Yellow
Abby	Female	Yellow
Isa	Female	Yellow
Greta	Female	Yellow
*Interviewed		

The Blue School

Specifically, within the Blue School, all of their 21 teachers, which included a pedagogista (who insures that the vision and philosophy of the school are present and alive in the everyday life of the school for children, teachers and families) and an aterlierista (a teacher with an arts background who embodies, enhances, elevates the expressive and poetic languages as tools for building knowledge) who both also acted as classroom teachers' part-time, one support staff, and two co-directors participated in this study. The average teacher tenure was 10 years with a range spanning from one year to 24 years. One of the co-directors was the owner and founder of the school. Of those 21

teachers and directors, six teachers: Nora, Taylor, Zoe, Holly, Eva and Amelie, and one director: Megan, participated in semi-structured interviews.

Nora: Self-identified culturally as African-American/ Black. She had worked at the Blue School for 8 years and in the field of ECEC for 10 years total. Her current position was a teacher in the preschool classroom and family coordinator. She had a BA in Anthropology and enrolled in ECEC courses to meet CA licensing requirements after being hired in her first position.

Taylor: Self-identified culturally as a Black Woman. She was currently enrolled in Community College pursuing ECE. The Blue School was the only school Taylor had worked in and she had been there for four years. She was a teacher in the preschool classroom.

Zoe: Self-identified culturally as Mexican-American. She had a Maters in ECE. Zoe had worked at the Blue School for two years and in the field for 15. Zoe's current position was a teacher in the preschool classroom, however, she had previously taught in the toddler classroom. Prior to working at the Blue School, Zoe had been a director of an infant-toddler program.

Holly: Self-identified culturally as European mix: half Portuguese and half white. She had a BA in Liberal Studies with an emphasis in Education. She was a teacher in the toddler room and had worked at the Blue school for one year. Holly had worked off and on in the field for 20 years.

Eva: Self-identified culturally as American. She had a Masters in ECE. Eva's current position was a teacher in the preschool classroom and Pedagogista. She had worked at the Blue School for 14 years and in the field for a total of 16 years.

Amelie: Self-identified culturally as Filipino and White. She had a BA in English, a minor in studio arts and 12 ECE units. Amelie was a teacher in the preschool classroom and had worked at the Blue School for 3 years. The Blue School was her only ECE experience.

Megan: Self-identified culturally as White. She had a Masters in ECE and was currently enrolled in an EED ECE program. She was currently a co-director at the Blue School, but had previously been a teacher at the Blue school for many years prior to becoming a director. She had worked at the Blue School for 22 years and it was the only school she had worked.

The Yellow School

At the Yellow School, all 18 staff members participated in this study. This staff included six lead teachers, six teacher assistants, two floating teachers that supported all classrooms, a playground coordinator, a cook/caretaker, an assistant director and a director. Average tenure for their staff was three and half years. The director was the owner and founder of the school. Of their 18 teachers and one director, six teachers: Lilian, Jessica, Faith, Annabelle, Leslie and Lisa, and the director: Jennifer, participated in semi-structured interviews.

Lilian: Self-identified culturally as half Hispanic and half White. She had a BA in English. Lilian was a Lead Teacher in the toddler room and had worked at the Yellow School since it opened, seven years prior. She had been in the ECEC field for 18 years.

Jessica: Self-identified culturally as White/Caucasian. She had a BA in Communications and was an Assistant Teacher in a preschool classroom. Jessica had worked at the Yellow School for eight months and in the field for 15 years.

Jennifer: Self-identified culturally as Caucasian. She had a PhD in ECE. Jennifer was the founder, owner and director of the Yellow School. She therefore had been at the Yellow School for the seven years of its existence, but in the field for 33 years. Jennifer has held various positions ranging from assistant teacher to her current role as director.

Faith: Self-identified culturally as White/Caucasian. She had a Masters in ECE and was an Assistant Teacher in a preschool classroom. Faith had worked at the Yellow School for two years and in the field for a total of four.

Annabelle: Self-identified culturally as Caucasian. She had her Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate and was a Lead Teacher in a preschool classroom. Annabelle had worked at the Yellow School for four years and in the field for 20 years.

Leslie: Self-identified culturally as White. She had her High School Diploma and was an Assistant Teacher in a Pre-Kindergarten classroom. Leslie had worked at the Yellow School for two years and in the field for 43 years.

Lisa: Self-identified culturally as a human being/ 4th generation American. She had a BA in Human Development and was a Lead Teacher in a Pre-Kindergarten classroom. Lisa had worked at the Yellow School for the 7 years it had been open and in the field for 30 years.

The Red School

For purposes of this research, I only interacted with the 14 lead teachers, 16 assistant teachers, the director, the executive director, the assistant director and the curriculum coordinator; no student workers (the 35 other support staff-students of the University) were observed or interviewed. Average tenure for lead teachers was eight years and one and half for assistant teachers. Of the 38 teachers and center leaders I observed, five teachers: Justice, Ulises, Veronica, Grace, and Gabi; one curriculum coordinator: Ashlyn; one assistant director: Celia; one director: Olivia; and one executive director: Sage, participated in semi-structured interviews.

Justice: Self-identified culturally as Hispanic-really more American. She had an Associate degree in ECE and was currently working on a BA in Human Development and Family Studies. She was a Lead Teacher in a Pre-Kindergarten classroom and had worked at the Red School for 10 years and in the field for 19 years.

Ulises: Self-identified culturally as Mexican-American. He had a BA in Social Work and was a Lead Teacher in a preschool classroom. He had worked at the Red School for eight years and in the field for 10.

Veronica: Self-identified culturally as an Austinite-Texan. She had a BA in Child Development and Diversity. She was a Lead Teacher in a toddler classroom. She had worked at the Red School for two years and in the field for 32 years.

Grace: Self-identified culturally as Caucasian-White. She was currently enrolled in a Teacher Track program provided by a local community college that supports ECEC teachers in obtaining their CDAs. She was an Assistant Teacher in a Toddler classroom and had been at the Red School for 15 years. The Red School was the only school Grace had worked at.

Gabi: Self-identified culturally as Hispanic. She was currently enrolled in the local Teacher Track program at her local Community College to obtain her CDA. Gabi was an Assistant Teacher in a toddler classroom and had been at the Red School for 90 days. She had been in the field for three years.

Ashlyn: Self-identified culturally as White. She had a Masters in Early Childhood Special Education and was the Curriculum Coordinator for all three of the University child development centers. Ashlyn had worked at the Red School for four years and in the ECEC field for 42 years.

Celia: Self-identified culturally as Black/African-American. She had her BA in Business Administration and an Associates degree in ECE. Celia was the Assistant Director of the Red School and had been there for two years. She had been in the ECEC field for more than 20 years.

Olivia: Self-identified culturally as Caucasian-White. She had her BA in Child Development and was currently enrolled in a Masters ECE program. Olivia was

the Red School's onsite director. She had been in her current position at the Red School for seven years and in the field for 24 years. Olivia had held various positions ranging from assistant teacher to her current role of director.

Sage: Self-identified culturally as a White, Jewish mother. She had a Masters degree in ECE. Sage was the Executive Director and oversaw the three of the University Child Development Centers which included the Red School. She had worked at the Red School in varying capacities for the past 26 years. Sage had been in the ECEC field a total of 30 years.

DATA SOURCES AND COLLECTION

It is important to note that I hold a social constructionist epistemological perspective as a researcher. I view knowledge as socially constructed within the interactions between the researcher and participants (Crotty, 1998). The investigator and the object of investigation are therefore interactively linked and the 'findings' are literally created as the investigation proceeds (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). This means that the researcher and the participant have a reciprocal relationship and knowledge is learned through interactions between the two. It is an interactive process and each influences the other (Mertens, 2015). The goal was not to discover but rather to construct meaning. Such an approach requires interactive modes of data collection.

Thus, in order to investigate the issue of teachers' and center leaders' sensemaking of IBPL across different types of ECEC programs, I purposefully selected (Merriam, 2009) these three cases for inclusion in this research because all were currently

engaging in various forms of IBPL. Data for this research was collected during the summer and fall of 2017.

Data sources included semi-structured interviews with center leaders and teachers whereby I had the opportunity to use questions flexibly, with no predetermined wording or order (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, Stake (1995) stated the primary way to gain data in case study work is through the use of interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed me to collect specific data from all participants, as I had a set of questions that loosely guided my interviews (see Appendix B for interview protocol). This semi-structured approach allowed me to respond to "the emerging worldview" of the participants and "to add new ideas on the topic" as they presented themselves (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). Most interviews were conducted individually with the exception of the Yellow School where participants were interviewed in pairs. I audiotaped all interviews and then transcribed them to be able to recall our conversations accurately, reflect upon the responses, and to find emerging themes through my data analysis strategies. A range of teachers were selected in partnership with the center director to include newest staff members (having worked in their current program for less than 1 year) and veteran staff members (having worked in the school 5 plus years). I piloted my interview protocol prior to collecting my data, and refined and adjusted my questions to ensure I got the data needed to answer my research questions. In total, 19 teachers and 4 center leaders were interviewed.

In addition to interviews, observations were also made during various forms of PL offered onsite of each of the three programs. In the Blue School, these observations

included partner meetings, program meetings, all staff meetings, as well as leadership team meetings. In the Yellow school, these observations included staff meetings, daily co-planning/PL time, as well as observations of article readings and discussions. In the Red School, these observations included staff meetings and Lunch-n-Learns.

Observation notes and photos were taken during all meetings and reflective notes written immediately following (Guba, Lincoln, Denzin, & Lincoln, 1998). These ‘meetings’ were all audiotaped, transcribed and then coded. While the interviews and meeting observations were the main source of data, they were supported with a collection of artifacts. Artifacts such as organizational manuals/requirements pertaining to PL, staff handbooks/orientation packets, school websites, state licensing regulations, and the National Accreditation Commission for early care and education programs (NAC) accreditation requirements were all collected, coded, and analyzed (Merriam, 2009). NAC offers an accreditation process that ECEC programs can electively qualify and apply for. This process requires centers to meet a set of criteria and teacher qualifications are just one aspect of the required criteria. Additional artifacts such as “commitment” documents from Blue School were collected as well as photos of staff room/meeting spaces, documentation tools, centers’ PL agendas, fliers, and materials. Combined, these artifacts provided ability for triangulation (Merriam, 2009) with data collected from the interviews and meeting observations.

DATA ANALYSIS

All data were transcribed, coded, mapped and categorized to illuminate major themes (Miles, Huberman, & Salanda, 2014). This multistep process followed traditional qualitative analytic methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Erikson, 1986; Miles & Huberman, & Salanda 2014) and cases were analyzed individually and then analyzed cross-case (Stake, 2006). For each case, interviews were transcribed and read multiple times alongside all artifacts collected. After each data set was read, analytic memos that represented "tentative analysis, thoughts, interpretations, questions and directions for further data collection" were made (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 110). Analytic memos were comprised of notes about emerging patterns in data, initial interpretations, and possible connections to current literature to be documented. Next, the data was analyzed deductively using a set of external codes generated from the notion of sense making (Graue & Walsh, 1998). For example, Collaboration, Relationships, Sensemaking, Ideal PD, and Change were some external codes that were used in relation to sensemaking.

Next, through inductive analysis, I created a set of internal codes that addressed the "issues that [came] up within reading of the data'' that did not fall under the original external codes (Graue & Walsh, 1998, p. 163). For example, a few of the codes added were: Teacher as 'Expert,' Practical vs. Theoretical, Spark, and Depth. After the data were coded and reread several times, themes were determined. These themes were then reread to "look for data that support alternative explanations" and ensure credibility in the themes (Patton, 2002, p.553). This process was the same for each case followed by cross

case analysis, whereby illumination of the aggregate was found. This interpretation across the cases was found through a "case-quintain dialectic" (Stake, 2006, p. 39). Meaning that by first studying the single cases, I was able to work "to explain the phenomenon as it appears in the several cases studied" (Stake, 2006, p. 40).

Credibility

There are many ways qualitative researchers work to build credibility and insure the trustworthiness and reliability of their research and I engaged in several of these ways to build reliability and trustworthiness within the confines of my study. First, reliability - or building dependability - was established by using triangulation, an audit trail, and analytic memos. Triangulation of data sources was used to ensure data interpretations were supported and to build confidence in the findings (Merriam, 1998). An audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) adds to the credibility of the study as it illuminated how the data were collected, how themes were established, and what decisions were made (the audit trail has been laid out here in the methods section (Merriam, 1998)). Finally, reliability was further established through the use of analytic memos; notes taken during the data collection and analysis process which helped to illuminate emerging patterns, my initial interpretations, and/or possible connections to current literature. These analytic memos were then used to confirm the analytic generalizations that are presented in this research (Glesne, 1999).

I then worked to establish internal validity in order to further build credibility by engaging in member checking (Merriam, 1998), which shows how data can be trusted

and seeks to establish a causal relationship; whereby certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions. By member checking and following up with my participants to confirm and/or correct findings as a method for establishing internal validity, I worked to insure an accurate portrayal of their lived realities by asking them for clarification and confirmation as I transcribed and coded my data, to ensure I had correctly captured their beliefs and clarify my own questions. This communication was mainly through email. For example, on November 9, 2018 Eva and I exchanged emails to clarify working agreements for the Blue School's collaborative inquiries. The use of triangulation of data was another way I worked to build internal validity. By collecting multiple sources of evidence, such as semi-structured interviews, meeting observations, meeting agendas, employee handbooks, past invites to PD training/mandates, materials from PD courses, as well as state regulations and accreditation criteria pertaining to staff qualifications and PD requirements, I was able to triangulate across various data sources.

External validity, or the transferability/generalizability of the data was established through the use of rich thick descriptions within my findings (Geertz, 1973). These thick descriptions provided through the use of descriptive quotes used throughout the case descriptions allow others to "assess similarity between them and…the study" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 125). Furthermore, through the use of these detailed descriptions, analytic generalizations can be made.

LIMITATIONS

Because this qualitative instrumental multiple case study addressed a limited set

of issues, it falls prey to traditional concerns about the validity and reliability of qualitative case studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). Unlike the experimental design that places merit on its ability to provide predictability in findings due to tightly controlled conditions, random sampling, and use of statistical probabilities, qualitative research places emphasis on gaining insight into complexity (Merriam, 2009). Yet, as was highlighted above, these 'limitations' in many regards are also found to be the strengths of qualitative studies.

Even still, additional limitations can be found within this study. For example, within this study there is a lack of data on center leaders' and teachers' actual practices and interactions within their classrooms. While data collection included interviews with center leaders and teachers and of their participation in PL opportunities provided onsite, no PL opportunities the teachers or directors engaged in off site nor direct observations of classroom teaching were observed. Observing the teachers in practice, while it could further triangulate the data, the aim and scope of this study was to address the broad understandings of how center leaders and teachers made sense of their engagements within PL and IBPL offered within their centers, and observations of classroom teaching would have not given me further insight into the their sense making of PL or IBPL.

Additionally, by using a purposeful sampling of a limited number of cases, while intentional and beneficial to case study research, can also be seen as a limitation. Because I purposefully selected a small sample of three programs in two states, my study is not able to make robust generalizations. However, as Stake (2005) noted, through the use of rich description, readers are able to learn vicariously from the cases as appropriate to

their own experiences. Furthermore, as Erikson (1986) noted, the general lies in the particular, whereby from coming to understand a specific case in depth, much can be learned.

Finally, qualitative case study research relies on the researcher as the primary instrument, which influences both data collection and interpretation and can be seen as an additional limitation. Therefore, I next identify my positionality and acknowledge the ways in which my subjectivities may have shaped "the collection and interpretation of the data" (Merriam, 2009, p. 15).

Researcher Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity, or as Lincoln and Guba (2000) referred to it, "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the 'human as instrument'" is important to acknowledge (p. 183). Additionally, it is important to acknowledge my own positionality, my perspective of PL, my own 'lived experiences', and my own biases (Banks, 1998) because they influenced my data collection as well as my interpretation and analysis of the data. By providing the reader with insight into my own personal beliefs and story, I am able to shed light on how I analyzed and interpreted the data. Banks (1998) noted, "social scientists are human beings who have both minds and hearts," and therefore, I must acknowledge that as a researcher my own mind and heart may have influenced my interpretations, as well as my data collection (p. 4). My past experiences in early childhood spaces, my education - both past and current as I pursue a PhD in early childhood education, as well as my cultural, White middle class upbringing,

all influence the way in which I view and interpret the world around me, and furthermore, impacted the ways I collected and interpreted this particular data set.

Through my coursework at the University of Texas, I have been asked about and required to reflect upon who I am, where I come from, my culture, my privileges, and how these various aspects of my identity have impacted and affected my educational experiences as well as my current perspectives as a researcher and teacher educator. This journey has required me to unpack my invisible White privilege knapsack (McIntosh, 1989). I have been given the opportunity to identify, acknowledge, understand and reflect upon how I have a certain level of power and privilege simply by being a member of the dominant culture (i.e. White, middle class and heterosexual). Having grown up part of the dominant culture, I had come to view myself and my experiences as 'normal' and never questioned my lived reality in relation to the limitations and social injustices 'Others' - not part of the dominate narrative - have to work against. While I was not completely oblivious to the realities of who I was or where I came from, what I did not realize was how both influenced and advantaged me in many ways. My power and privilege must therefore be acknowledged and recognized as they inevitably influenced my data collection and analysis processes.

Additionally, my years of experience in early childhood settings may have given me some 'insider' positioning as I conducted this research (Merriam, Bailey, Lee, Ntseane, Muhamad, 2001). I was an 'insider' in the lives of the directors and teachers and my experiences of being both a director and teacher in a private for-profit play-based preschool and a state-funded play-based preschool allowed me to make connections and

share in similar experiences to my participants. Yet, in many ways, I was also an 'outsider,' as I was no longer working in the center environment, and I had not worked in the contexts I was investigating, which meant I did not know what was and was not of importance or value--socially, educationally, or culturally within each of these teaching environments. Furthermore, my current role as a researcher and teacher educator positioned me with a level of power that cannot be ignored (Merriam, et al., 2001). 'Power' in the sense that I may have been seen to a certain level as an 'expert,' or knowledgeable in many ways connected to the ECEC field. This positioning may have created a space that positioned my participants to feel less knowledgeable than myself.

Still, I feel the conversations with my participants afforded me great insights into *their* world I otherwise would be oblivious to. For example, several teachers made a comment in their interviews that talking with me felt like "therapy." When they used the term in this way, I felt that I had built a rapport with my participants and that they may be freely expressing themselves in regards to their understandings and experiences with PL and IBPL. Therefore, I felt as if I were granted access into their worlds; worlds where their thoughts and ideas were representative of their lived realities. When shared, it became my job as a researcher to share these stories in a manner that respected and reflected their personal histories. By acknowledging and accepting my positionality, I worked throughout this research process to ensure I allowed space for the center leaders' and teachers' perspectives, understandings, experiences and concerns to be illuminated, rather than diluted by my own beliefs and perspectives.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I outlined my rational for selecting a qualitative multiple instrumental case study. I discussed my case selection, my participants and data collection process. I also reviewed the techniques I used for data analysis and to establish and maintain credibility through building reliability and trustworthiness throughout the research process. I then addressed the limitations of my research and have ended this chapter by acknowledging my own positionality and the influence it has had on my research.

FINDINGS

Chapter 4: Professional Learning

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I answer my first research question: How do school leaders and teachers make sense of professional learning (PL) and their experiences within them and their school community. While I intended to find programs engaging in inquiry based professional learning (IBPL), finding programs that were enacting all key components of IBPL as defined in Chapter 2 proved challenging (see figure 2.1). While all three of these programs engaged in varying forms of IBPL, they all were still missing some key aspects of IBPL (see figure 3.1). Yet, the purpose of this study was not to be critical of the varying IBPL enactments specifically or create a list of best practices. Rather, my goal was to shed light on how varying programs engaged in various forms of PL as well as IBPL specifically, which I describe in detail in Chapter 5. In doing so, my goal was to learn from and understand how the center leaders and teachers within the varying programs not only made sense of and described their engagements but also how they might alter them to better fit their needs. Thus, by first analyzing their sensemaking of PL, which is both a cognitive and emotional process that creates space to label and categorize information to "stabilize the streaming of experience," (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 411), I gained insight into the components of IBPL (Coburn, 2004; Luttenberg, Van Veen, & Imants, 2013; Schmidt & Datnow, 2005; Spillane et al., 2002; Van Veen & Lasky, 2005).

To examine their sensemaking of PL, I first present findings from each case, the Blue, Yellow, and Red Schools that highlight how, within each of these programs, PL was enacted, and how the teachers and center leaders within each school made sense of PL. Within each individual case analysis, I outline each program and explain how and why the programs were selected. Next, I describe the PL opportunities each program offered and/or engaged in. Then, to "include the diversity of contexts," I analyze how within each case the teachers and centers leaders made sense of PL (Stake, 2006, p.23). While I prefer the term PL, I note here that most of the teachers and directors used the term PD, and therefore, within their quotes, you will see the usage of PD rather that PL.

I end this chapter with a cross-case analysis of their understandings of PL (Yin, 2014). By doing so, the "dialogue" is further deepened across the three programs (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 415). Such an analysis also provides insight into the question of "now what" as the "presumptions about the future…become increasingly clear as they unfold" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 413). Therefore, within this chapter, I paid close attention to how these teachers and center leaders made sense of PL and by doing so, provided me with insight into their sensemaking of IBPL as well, which I discuss in Chapter 5.

THE BLUE SCHOOL

The Blue School, located in northern California, was originally selected based on a referral from an ECE professor who believed the Blue School was "involved in lots of PD in their center." During my initial conversation with Eva, the Blue School's

pedagogista and preschool teacher, she described how their program had, over the past several years, gone through some program shifts--they had moved from following a High Scope curriculum towards becoming more Reggio inspired. Furthermore, Eva mentioned that the Blue School had weekly staff meetings that included 45 minutes dedicated to collaborative group inquiry. In addition to weekly staff meetings, Eva also mentioned that they had weekly teacher meetings, and furthermore, they were part of a larger teacher collaborative initiative within their geographical area that met a few times throughout the year with teachers from several other Reggio inspired schools.

Based on this initial conversation, I originally selected the Blue School due to their weekly staff meeting collaborative group inquiry enactments, but through my observations, dialogue, and interviews of and with teachers and center leaders, I came to see that inquiry was present in a variety of forms within the Blue School. Thus, I first describe all of the PL opportunities the Blue School offers and/or requires their staff to attend, and then, I share how the teachers and the center leaders of this school made sense of these varying PL enactments.

PL Offered and/or Required

PL at the Blue School included: onsite weekly age group staff meetings, partner (co-teacher) meetings, bi-monthly all staff meetings, time onsite and offsite for self-selected and individualized PD, and engagement with other teachers/programs outside of their school by attending a collaborative collective. Specifically, onsite, teachers at the Blue School were required to attend weekly one and a half hour staff meetings. Staff

meetings were age group specific, whereby there was one meeting for all infant and toddler (IT) teachers, and one meeting for all preschool teachers. Both groups used a large white board posted in the staff room to make notes and put on agenda items during the week prior to the meeting- see Figure's 4.1 and 4.2 for outlines of meeting agendas. Each group, via a democratic process, determined the individual flow/schedule of each meeting, but both included: check-ins (everyone shared how they were doing personally and professionally); business (anything related to classroom/program needs); and collaborative inquiry (teachers proposed topics and took turns leading). Differences between the groups included, the IT teachers had time set aside to discuss children and families as well as curriculum, and the preschool teachers had time set aside to discuss classroom observations--where each classroom rotated sharing what was happening in their classroom and flex time-- to use as needed.

These one and a half hour staff meetings took place during children's nap/rest time. Teachers of the alternate age group covered all of the classrooms while the children rested, with the exception of one preschool teacher who stayed to support the preschool nap ratios, as there were more preschool classrooms than IT. To do this, there was a rotating list, and every teacher took a turn to miss the weekly staff meeting (approximately once every 13 weeks). To ensure best use of the meeting time, the Blue School had also created a rotating role and responsibility list, which included a facilitator, timekeeper, and note taker (see Figure 4.3) as well as agreements (see Figure 4.4). These guiding principles were influenced by the Blue Schools' engagement in a research project several years ago by a group of organizational development students from a local state

university. These university students observed the Blue School's meetings and interviewed teachers and center leaders and provided feedback, which led to the rotating roles, responsibilities and the overall general structure of the meetings.

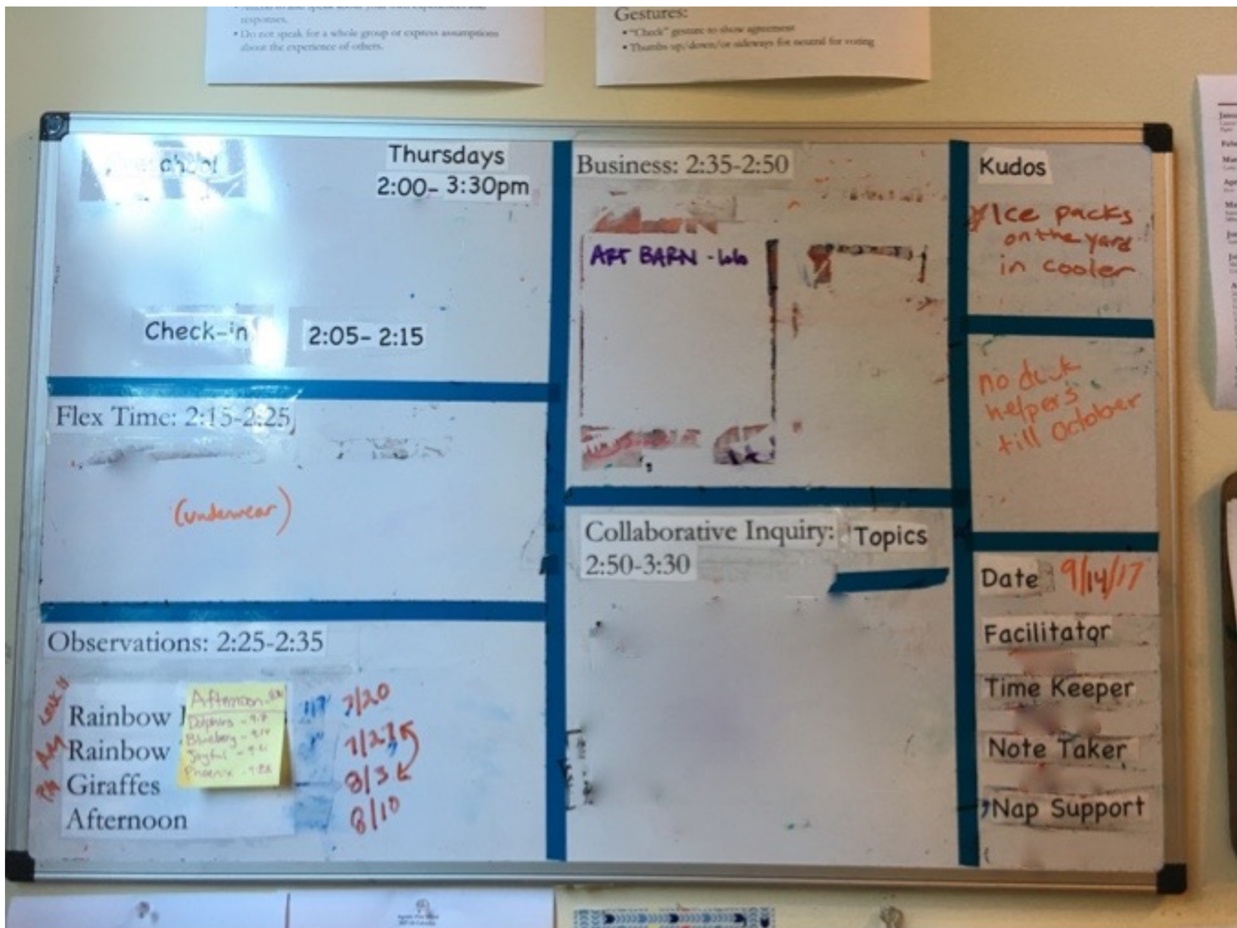


Figure 4.1 Blue School's Preschool Staff Meeting Agenda

Figure 4.2 Blue School’s Infant/Toddler Staff Meeting Agenda

I/T MTG

Date	Facilitator	Time keeper	Note Taker	Nap Support
8/30				
9/6				
9/13				
9/20				
9/27				
10/4				
10/11				
10/18				
10/25				
11/1				
11/8				
11/15				
11/22				
11/29				

Figure 4.3 Blue School's Infant/Toddler Roles and Responsibility Rotation Chart

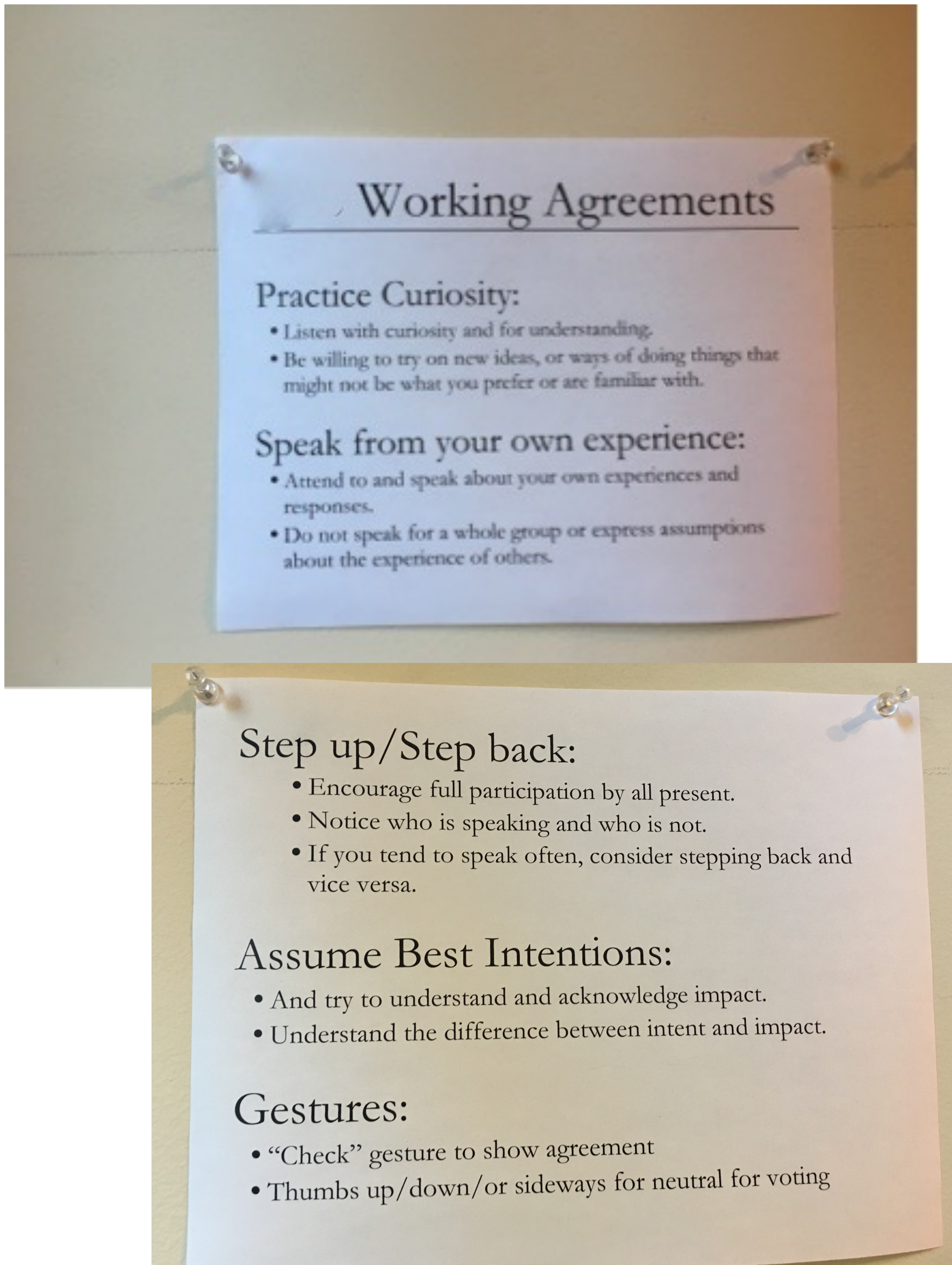


Figure 4.4 Blue School's Working Agreements

In addition to staff meetings, each teacher was provided two hours of individual office time weekly. This office time was designed to provide teachers time to work on lesson planning/reflections, children's portfolios and documentation, to have communication with families, and/or their own professional growth. Furthermore, teachers also had one hour per week to meet and collaborate with their co-teacher. These partner meetings were intended for teachers to collaborate regarding their classroom, and could cover anything from lesson planning to discussing children and families. Bimonthly, the Blue School also required all staff to attend an all-staff meeting after hours that lasted one and a half hours. During these meetings, issues that impacted the whole school community were discussed. The leadership team, which included the two directors: Megan and Mary, the pedagogista, Eva and the family engagement coordinator, Nora, met bi-weekly for one hour as well. Additionally, the Blue School closed one week during the summer, and three additional days throughout the school year for annual teacher in-service; which was teacher identified and teacher led. By being presenters, teachers contributed both to the topics as well as the content presented during annual in-service. Often, the topics covered or the discussions that began during the in-service days got carried over into the weekly and bi-weekly staff meetings or vice-versa.

In addition to these various onsite PL opportunities/requirements, the Blue School also provided their teachers with a stipend of up to $200 per year to attend PL opportunities of their choosing. This PL did not have to be directly related to working with children but could have simply been something of personal interest to the teachers that they felt would benefit them in their teaching practices (i.e., meditation). In addition

to the $200 stipend, the Blue School also paid for their teachers to attend and take part in a local Reggio Inspired Teaching Collective (RITC). This group was composed of local Reggio inspired schools that came together periodically and shared roundtable style in reflection to a particular theme, for example "The View of the Child." This group worked to create a culture of dialogue and research that "promotes the pleasure of inquiry among children and adults" (RITC Website). As a school, the Blue School teachers and center leaders were asked to attend two of the seven round tables per year, but teachers were able to attend more if they desired.

Sensemaking

When analyzing how the teachers and administrators made sense of these various PL enactments within the Blue School, four major themes emerged: PL as a core value; PL deepens their understanding of practice; PL outside of Blue School; and PL fosters partnerships. Within these themes, I integrate both the sensemaking of the center leaders and the teachers, even though how they made sense of PL may vary from each other (Erickson, 2014; Lipksy, 1980), as I hope to tell a more complete story of what I learned. While center leaders and teachers may be classified and separated in many cases, their understandings and sensemaking of PL appeared to be interconnected. By combining their understandings of PL, it helps clarify how PL was implemented within their community and how teachers and center leaders either supported or desired change. In some cases, there were some differences in how the Blue School center leaders and teachers made sense of their engagements with PL, but overall, these center leaders and

teachers seemed to express similar understandings and therefore as Erickson (2014) noted, I hope to engage in "research that…respects the sense-making of [all the] local social actors who want to make schools better places for teaching and learning" which in this case includes both center leaders and teachers alike (p. 4).

PL as a Core Value

First, PL was noted as a core value both explicitly by the Blue School personnel through website and handbook articulations and implicitly through my interactions and communications with teachers and center leaders. For example, the Blue School's website stated,

> We are committed to the PD of Blue School's teachers, teachers in the community, and students of ECE…to grow and evolve in the field of ECE…to the cultivation of our school as a place of research, with a community of learners, and for active global citizens to engage in democratic practice.

This website articulation posited PL as an opportunity to support teachers within and outside of their school to provide early childhood experiences that promote a more just and democratic society. Furthermore, their website continued by stating, "Professional development is the right of the teacher," which appeared to further emphasize the value they placed on PL.

Yet, while the public commitments to PL were notable, they were supported further by the center leaders' and teachers' daily actions and reflections within their interviews. For example, Mary, a co-director and the owner, mentioned during my initial

tour of the Blue School that PL was a core value within their school. She expressed the amount of time and money that was invested in providing the teachers with varying opportunities to engage in PL. When asked about how logistically they made it work, she mentioned that because the teachers valued the time provided to them, they often worked with each other to figure out how to cover for their individual office hours, partner meetings or weekly staff meetings when teachers were out and they had to deviate from their normally scheduled times. Mary also mentioned that she and Megan, the other co-director, often covered for the teachers in their classrooms as needed, because "we value the meeting time" (Field Note, 8/15/2017). The Blue School was also closed annually for ten in-service days. Megan commented in her interview that, "We make that a priority in our calendar. And, in our communication to families, we always explain why it's so important." Combined, Megan and Mary expressed the value the Blue School had placed on PL; closing the entire center 10 days is a large commitment of a year round, full-day school. Also, as Megan noted, closing the school for 10 days a year required clear communication to families who have to find alternative care during these days.

Amelia, a teacher, expressed that while she believed PL was "something that we do already, that's natural to the teaching process. To learn more about a problem or a person and do research," she respected the Blue School's directors for making the time within her working hours to engage in PL. She continued,

> Unless that time is designated, you do it by yourself, at home, on the phone, when your kids are asleep…we do it anyway because we have to, because we are called to do so, that's our job but having the leadership choose to make that a part of our

day while we're on the clock…putting the resources to make it happen, really shows me that it's a priority for us to do isolated work together.

Here, Amelia expressed her understanding of being a teacher as one who continually engages in PL to "learn more" and "do research," and furthermore, she called attention to how PL was positioned within the Blue School by the director's commitment to offer their teachers time to engage in these practices while "on the clock." The culture of the Blue School therefore seemed to influence in part the ability to sustain changes and ongoing reflection in practice (Gallacher, 1997; Welch-Ross et al., 2006). Valuing PL appears to require the support and flexibility of not only the teachers but the directors as well so that they can support classroom ratios as needed and create a community that fosters PL opportunities (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Long, Souto-Manning, & Vasquez, 2016).

PL Deepens their Understanding of Practice

According to the teachers and center leaders at the Blue School, because PL was valued, PL therefore created space to engage in such practices as asking questions so that they could deepen their understanding of their teaching practices (Orlofski, 2001). Nora, a teacher, expressed this as she stated in her interview, "PD is any experiences that will ask you to question your own practices, or deepen your thoughts about your teaching practices." She continued, "An example from our school is collaborative inquiry, which is just taking a topic that's trending, and expanding and learning more about it." Eva, pedagoista and teacher, added in her interview, "The teachers have a lot of time

to…question each other...depending on the teacher and depending on their experience, some of them are more comfortable than others with questioning each other." For Eva, the teachers played a role each other's PL by posing questions of each other, which she further noted could "actually end up with something that's better for the classroom and the children because people were able to have their ideas or practices questioned and then re-examined and therefore changed them." Eva described how opportunities for change happen when teachers were open to allowing others to question their practices. Mantilla and Kroll (2018) also posited that, "As teachers start to feel that they can ask their own questions without judgment and feel truly listened to, the space can become an authentic thinking space for all teachers that transforms teacher's internal thinking, sense of agency and identity, and their teaching strategies and practices" (p. 170). Such opportunities to ask questions were afforded to the Blue School teachers during their weekly staff meetings and collaborative inquiry time as Eva and Nora noted.

Moreover, at the Blue School, in addition to engaging in weekly collaborative inquiries, all teachers were encouraged and welcomed by the center leaders to present topics of personal interest at annual in-service days, regardless of education or experience. Amelie, a preschool teacher who presented at their most recent in-service day, reflected on that experience in her interview,

> [Presenting] gave me a little more visibility. It gives teachers a sense of my aptitude and interest… just getting a chance to take a risk and lead my peers ... For me, knowing that it's a safe place to do that, I hope that makes it possible for other people to want to take leadership too.

Here, Amelie pointed out that having opportunities to lead, and to “take a risk” in a “safe place” was important as it allowed her to learn from and with others. Furthermore, Megan, a director, added that PL was, “ the ongoing process of future learning” and happens in “all kinds of ways.” As Nora, Eva and Amelie highlighted above, from collaborative inquiry to annual in-service days, deepening their understanding of teaching practices in diverse ways, such as through questioning, was an aspect the teachers and center leaders at Blue School seemed to value from their PL engagements.

Through these articulations, the Blue School teachers and center leaders balanced their conceptualizations of teachers as lifelong learners and as beings capable and competent with knowledge to share. To highlight this point further, Zoe, a preschool teacher, reflected on her experiences at a previous school as she commented,

> Liz (the director) takes a perspective of teachers that's really admiring. She wants to grow [the teachers] as professionals. She was always saying, "You're a professional in this field, you're like a scientist, you're doing inquiries, you're making discoveries, you're not just taking care of children." And being a professional she would say is going out there and seeking information to make your practice better.

Therefore, as these teachers and center leaders made sense of PL, which included reflecting on their prior PL experiences, further emphasized the idea that they saw PL as an opportunity to expand upon their classroom teaching practices. Whereby positioning teachers as Zoe articulated above, as “professionals” who should continually focus on improving practice.

Nevertheless, as Zoe continued, she further expressed the role she saw center leaders playing in supporting the PL of teachers:

> [The director] valued the PD that she was giving her teachers…so much, that as much as the parents would push, you really have to close one day out of the month? She would say, "Yes, I do because I have to provide my teachers with PD because it's going to improve their practices and then make it better for your child." And she just stuck to that.

Here, Zoe highlighted how within her sense making of PL, center leaders play an important role in fostering the spaces for PL which in turn could create the opportunity to deepen their understanding of practices as well.

However, Nora, brought attention to the idea that maybe the Blue School was somewhat unique in its approach to seeing PL as creating opportunities to critically reflect on teaching practices. She compared her PL experiences at a previous school to the Blue School by stating,

> That first school that I worked at, everybody was so happy. The kids were super happy, the teachers were super happy, and the parents were super happy. Everybody was happy. Things stayed the same, the classroom setup didn't change, the toys didn't change. Everything stayed the same, and everybody was super happy.

Yet she continued, "If we tried that at the Blue School, there would be so many problems. So it just depends on where you are. In terms of working here, you definitely need to show that you're growing and changing over time." Therefore, for Nora, the cultural

perspective of a school and those working within it influence PL. At the Blue School, change was considered to be a constant, and their PL opportunities therefore worked to foster an environment that was supportive of that.

PL Outside of Blue School

Another aspect that teachers and center leaders mentioned as a valuable experience within their sensemaking of PL was having learning experiences outside of the Blue School, which others have also suggested are essential in PL (e.g., Schraw, 1998; Timperley et al., 2007). One way this occurred for the Blue School teachers and center leaders was visiting other schools. For instance Amelie, a preschool teacher, highlighted such visits created space to, "See what other schools are doing," and "It also helps to bring new techniques into my practice with the kids. To me, that's really beneficial." The "new techniques" offered different ideas and Taylor, a preschool teacher, added, "…Physically seeing something else is helpful. Especially since the Blue School is the only school I've ever worked at. So, it is nice to see what other people are doing in our field, and how they're managing." Furthermore, Taylor continued, "It's also inspiring, because people share their stories on one topic, and…there's a lot of meaning that goes into it, and comes out of it…The round-tables are really great for PD. I feel like I learned a lot there." Holly, a preschool teacher commented similarly in her interview,

> When I was at my old school, they hosted a round table…through the Reggio Inspired Teaching Collective (RITC). Lella Gandini was there, and she talked about her work with young kids. And there were several other schools that came

> and spoke about their work. So, that was very fascinating. Just seeing how creative all the other schools are…It's nice to see what other people are doing out there.

Combined, Holly, Taylor and Amelia expressed the value and impact being apart of the RITC had on them, their teaching and their PL. Seeing and hearing from other teachers and schools provided different perspectives from which to view and evaluate their own work.

While visiting other schools was noted as impactful for their PL, these teachers and center leaders at the Blue School also expressed that they appreciated the ability to collaborate and talk through their experiences engaging in outside trainings/roundtables with their co-teachers. For example, director Mary presented the calendar of dates for the year's upcoming RITC round tables at their annual in-service meeting and expressed a desire for the entire teaching team to attend as a group (Observation Note, 8/15/17).

Zoe, a preschool teacher, reflected on attending previous round tables within the RITC with her co-workers in her interview as she noted,

> It brought us together, we would drive together, on the way there we were kind of chatty about other stuff but on the way back we were very inspired and were talking and trying to figure out how we could do it at our school…When you go with your group you're seeing it together and then you're able to relate…it's more beneficial when we go as a staff versus when we go by ourselves.

Within this statement, Zoe expressed the value many of these teachers and center leaders expressed having attended the RITC meetings together provided; opportunity to further

reflect on the roundtables and the opportunity to think about making changes in their practices. Zoe believed that such changes were easier to do with the support of other teachers rather than trying to go it alone. By having time for collaboration following these varying PL experiences, teachers were able to encourage and engage in teacher learning and in turn conceptualize making changes to their teaching practices, as others have also found (e.g., Cordingley, Bell, Thomason, & Firth, 2005; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Westheimer, 2008).

Taylor, further noted that she enjoyed going to various workshops the directors of the Blue School had suggested. For example she stated in her interview, “Those are still incredibly useful. I went to one that was at the RIE Center, and I came away with a lot of interesting knowledge.” Taylor noted how outside knowledge, whether in the form of formal education or outside trainings, in some cases “fills the gaps” for her. Furthermore, for Taylor, “It feels a little bit more practical to me… It adds context.” Therefore, formal education activities appeared to be a key feature in how these teachers and center leaders made sense of PL. For example, Taylor, who was taking ECE courses at a local community college to meet the CA state licensing requirements, additionally noted,

> Yeah. I would do it ... I feel like, even if I didn't have to take ECE classes, I would want to anyways. Just because... It really makes me happy to be learning in a class…it's like I'm bridging a gap for myself. One, I do have knowledge, but two, like, "Look, this is what your kids are actually going through," and it's like, "Oh, wow, like, I see this!" I see it happening, and it keeps my mind, very…. I feel purposeful and focused.

Taylor expressed here that although she was technically required by the CA state licensing regulations to obtain what are often termed the '12 core ECE units' to be able to be left alone with children, she "doesn't mind it." Taylor viewed the course work as impactful to her teaching practices and therefore valued her engagement with it. Likewise, Eva, who was serving as a Teaching Assistant (TA) at her local University, for a masters ECE course on multicultural education, reflected on the fact that she was going to lead the class that week. She noted in her interview,

> The class is super interesting, and I feel it's actually going to be really good. It's multicultural education, and the readings are so interesting. I feel like next time that we want to have an anti-bias kind of inquiry, there are a lot of really good resources that I'm going to have. It's multi-dimensional, so that's good.

Eva's reflections noted that while being a TA required a lot of work on her part, she was finding it valuable personally and potentially for the Blue School in general for future collaborative inquiries by offering "really good resources."

Holly suggested that the Blue School could further bridge the theory/practice gap and "Bring speakers in who are professionals in what they're doing…Different people in the field, that all relate to working with children." She mentioned that they had done this in the past and it was "really helpful" and she would like to see more. She continued further,

> At my other schools I've worked at...there was a lot of PD. They also had a whole week where…they would have speakers come in and talk to us. It was more structured then at [the Blue School]...It's just different. This was more formal, and

> more structured...they also gave classes. Like, they would have classes on different parts of teaching preschoolers math, about parts of Reggio - they would give classes on play. So, all that was very helpful.

Holly’s comments expressed a desire to have more formalized ‘trainings’ within the PL opportunities offered directly at the Blue School; particularly by people not already working at the Blue School. Such articulations lend themselves to seeing PL as opportunities to gain practical, hands-on and foundational understanding of working with children; things that can be taken back and implemented right away in your classroom.

Combined, within the Blue School teachers and center leaders sense making of PL they expressed a need to have access to a variety of PL experiences as well as opportunities to receive PL from outside resources such as teachers from other schools, outside ‘experts,’ and teacher educators in college settings. Such variety, as they articulated, could ‘improve their practices’ and therefore some teachers, such as Holly, wished for this variety to be done onsite the Blue School.

PL Fosters Partnerships

As the teachers and center leaders in the Blue School made sense of PL, relationships and partnerships were also expressed as having an impact on their sensemaking of PL.

Director/teacher partnerships. First, partnerships between the director and teachers seemed to be a “plausible narrative” for what was going on within the sense making of PL across the Blue School teachers and center leaders (Sandberg & Tsoukas,

2015, p. 9). For example, Megan, a director, noted, she saw herself "primarily as a partner" in her teachers' PD. She continued,

> I try to be connected to and invested in their learning process, to understand what each teacher is trying to work on. And then, to walk alongside them in that process, offer resources, and strategies, and sometimes structure it for them.

Megan drew attention to the idea that 'supporting' teachers required not only providing PL opportunities but relationship building which could allow directors to "walk alongside" teachers in their PL. Such partnerships were observed in the Blue School as directors Mary and Megan often worked together with their teachers in their classrooms. Furthermore, as Mary mentioned during a leadership team meeting, "We were on the phone for an hour and a half this Saturday," referring to a conversation she had with Megan regarding to how to further support the Blue School teachers' professional learning.

Eva, a pedagogista and preschool teacher, further highlighted the partnerships she saw between teachers and center leaders as she reflected during her interview,

> There is kind of unlimited access to the directors. Some teachers I know meet with one of the directors once a week because either they've identified they need that much mentorship and training, or the directors have identified that they need that. Meeting time is very respected here I would say.

Eva's comments further highlighted that in addition to working along side the teachers in their classrooms, the directors also met individually with teachers as needed.

These interactions between the directors and teachers impacted the teachers. Specifically, as Amelia, a preschool teacher and alterista, described during her interview how Mary, the director/owner, had fostered an environment committed to valuing PL. Amelia stated:

> When I started I was under another director… The general culture of the school has changed a little bit...under [Mary's] leadership…that makes a big difference…I mean it's not directly related to PD, but the general morale was low and so interest and motivation was low…now I feel a general sense of positivity and commitment and collaboration that wasn't there before and that makes it easier to want to develop professionally.

Amelia's statement brings to light how within this program, and the directors specifically, had fostered opportunities for PL or a comfortable space to engage in PL through their everyday interactions. Whereby as Amelia articulated, Mary, her current director, had fostered positive staff morale, which in turn had created a welcome space for teachers "to develop professionally." The director/teacher partnerships therefore fostered a culture that as the teachers and center leaders of the Blue School made sense of PL they articulated as impacting their engagements in those practices (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Zoe, a preschool teacher also expressed the impact director/teacher relationships could have on PL. Zoe articulated a desire for more mentorship within these relationships. She articulated this as she stated in her interview,

> I go to the RITC meetings, and I think, wow this is amazing I want to do this stuff…But then it's up to me to make it happen. I think it would be helpful to have

> somebody like Eva's role to help you make it happen. And then for it to be part of your regular meeting.

Zoe highlighted here that while she found attending RITC roundtables inspiring, implementing changes was a challenge. In Bruder and colleague's (2009) work looking at interviews from early intervention and preschool special education coordinators in 50 states about the current status of professional development in-service systems in their state, they found that teachers wished they had someone available to work with them directly versus solely attending a workshop based PD that offered little or no connection or follow up to actual classroom practices. Zoe seemed to believe similarly, that more consistent interactions with leadership could help foster change. She continued,

> Having to ask for help for a lot of teachers is hard, you know? Sometimes it may be seen as, 'Oh somebody is going see me as incompetent; I can't do my work.' So I think it would be more helpful if somebody was always going around and mentoring you. I think that would help professionally for all these teachers.

Therefore, for Zoe, having ongoing partnerships between teachers and leaders could potentially help to create a 'safe space' for teachers to be open in expressing and getting their PL needs met.

Peer Partnerships. While the director/teacher partnerships seemed to be important within these teachers and center leaders' sensemaking of PL, peer partnerships within and amongst teachers were also highlighted. Amelia noted in her interview,

> The collaborative inquiry piece is a really huge part of that meeting for me, even though it's only 40 minutes. Learning something new together, or sharing observations together, that part of the meeting I think builds community and understanding among the teachers. Having time to do that is really significant.

Amelia emphasized the important role she saw peer relationships playing in fostering PL. Additionally, all meetings at the Blue School started by doing ‘checking-ins’. During this time, teachers and center leaders could share what was happening personally for them. Nora, reflected on these ‘check-ins’ as she stated in her interview,

> It's such a good way to get to know people... It's kind of like forced closeness. Or, it at least it will show you who is super open to being close, and who is a little more guarded. And you just get to learn about people and their lives.

Check-ins allowed Nora to feel connected to her fellow teachers; a connection, which she later articulated, had supported and fostered their collaborative inquiry enactments. Yet, she also noted that these check-ins,

> Actually sometimes makes things more complicated. Because instead of like at other schools where I feel you are expected to be your professional self-everyday no matter what's going on in your life. But because we do check-ins, there's this added "You know what I'm struggling with right now, you know why I'm not doing what I'm supposed to be doing..." It complicates, but also brings us closer together.

By creating space for vulnerability, Nora noted that ‘check-ins’ allowed her to get to know her fellow teachers and connect on a personal level, which for her supported partnerships within the classroom.

Holly also articulated a similar sentiment when she reflected she “just needs more time” to feel comfortable in sharing her ideas and topics for collaborative inquiry with her peers. She continued,

> Sometimes, I feel like some people are really clustered together and stick with certain people, and sometimes, I see there's kind of a hierarchy. And it's hard to have an even working environment when one person feels more experienced than the other. So, there’s not an even working relationship.

Here, Holly called attention to the fact that due to the “closeness” of certain groups of teachers, and possibly not feeling part of that group, had kept her from speaking up to get her PL needs meet, specifically within collaborative inquiries.

Yet, these relationships can be built as Amelia noted within, “carpooling with other teachers (to trainings)…the hour long drive each way that's also a big part of bonding and getting close.” She further noted it was important,

> To have social relationships. I mean not necessarily social, it's still professional but to have a personal relationship away from the children that we can lean on when it feels hard in program... There's something at stake here that's not just that child's lunch experience, but like we have a relationship and a connection. It strengthens and allows us to do more I think.

And Eva further added that these relationships with peers were important to what she described as their “community-based school.” She continued,

> Even though we have different classrooms, we still all depend on each other a lot in a lot of different ways. All of us cover for each other when we're taking breaks. It really helps foster that, I think. The teachers have a lot of time to just sit down and form relationships when they're talking during their meetings.

Combined, Eva, Amelia, Holly and Nora highlighted how the role of peer relationships impacted PL. Additionally, as Amelia and Nora noted, there needed to be opportunities to get to know their fellow teachers on a personal level, to feel as Holly expressed, “included” and comfortable in sharing their PL needs. Eva further commented these relationships allowed her to “let off steam and open up to be able to say, ‘I had a really hard time with this today’ or provide emotional support, ‘is this child driving you crazy?’ Yes. It's not just me.” Because for Eva, “Emotional support is really important” for PL and was provided within peer relationships.

Conclusion

In all, the Blue School’s directors provided and required their teachers to participate in several PL opportunities, and the teachers had varying perspectives and understandings of their experiences within those PL engagements. Yet, the Blue School teachers and center leaders expressed a desire for PL to deepen and/or create opportunities to question practices. Furthermore, supportive relationships and effective partnerships created opportunity for teachers to feel comfortable to question each other as

well as bring forward topics they would like to learn more about. Outside PL and enrolling in higher education provided insight and different perspectives from which to critically evaluate and question their practice and may provide the foundation from which the teachers could work from. Finally, it was made clear by the teachers and center leaders that these PL opportunities could not be possible without a foundational perspective towards PL as a core value. By positioning PL as the "right of the teacher," the investment of the time and money was allocated to further foster these varying enactments.

YELLOW SCHOOL

I originally selected the Yellow School, located in central Texas, based on a working relationship I had with the director, Jennifer, and my prior knowledge of the Yellow School's PL engagements. Having known Jennifer for two years, I had come to learn quite a bit about the Yellow School. From my knowledge, I knew that not only did Jennifer offer formal ECE trainings to the public, she also provided her teachers PL opportunities onsite as well. However, I was not exactly sure what those PL opportunities looked liked in practice. After visiting Jennifer at the Yellow School, I was able to learn more about what types of PL were offered to the Yellow School teachers. I was particularly interested in two components of the Yellow School's PL: article reflections and their daily collaboration and planning time. While these two practices did not fully meet all of the components of IBPL, I felt they provided a contrast to my other two

schools and would offer insight into varying ways to think about beginning to implement IBPL.

While I understood that the Yellow School was not engaging in robust IBPL, I still felt there was much to learn from them. Therefore, I first describe all of the PL opportunities the Yellow School offers and/or requires their staff to attend and then share how the teachers and the center leaders of this school made sense of these varying PL enactments.

PL Offered and/or Required

Teachers at the Yellow School were required to engage in 24 hours each year of PD to stay in compliance with the TX state licensing regulations plus and addition 6 hours to maintain the schools NAC accreditation status (see table 4.1 for more information regarding state regulations). To support teachers in achieving the required 30 annual hours, teachers at the Yellow School were provided a few onsite opportunities. First, weekly staff meetings were held for an hour after the children had gone home. During these meetings, Jennifer, the director often provided trainings, which could be counted towards their professional growth hours for both their state licensing regulations as well as their accreditation requirements.

State Licensing Regulations:	Texas	California
Teacher Qualifications: *(Can be left alone with children)*	At least 18 Years Old, High School Graduate	At least 18 years old and 12 Core ECE Units: Including Child, Growth and Development; Child, Family and Community; Curriculum Course and Infant/Toddler Course if working with that age group
Teacher In Process Qualifications: *(Can be left alone with children)*	At least 18 Years Old, High School Graduate	At least 18 years old, 3 Core ECE Units completed and then continuously enrolled towards the completion of the 12 Core as listed above.
Assistant Teacher Qualifications: (*Must accompany a Teacher with the exception of nap time)*	At least 18 Years Old, High School Graduate	At least 18 Years Old
Annual Professional Development Hours:	All staff required to have 24 hours annually which include CPR and First Aid training.	At least one teacher must be on site that is trained in CPR, First Aid and Blood Born Pathogens at all times.

Table 4.1 Texas Community Care Licensing Teacher Requirements

The structure and flow of the meetings varied and was dependent upon the immediate needs of the school as identified by the director, Jennifer. Sometimes these meetings would come from the two-hour courses that she offered as public trainings, broken up and talked about on several different occasions. Examples of these topics include things such as multicultural and anti-bias curriculum, promoting socio-dramatic play, or understanding gender in the EC classroom. Yet, according to Jennifer, a lot of times the meetings and trainings had to do with seasonal things, such as parent teacher conferences or annual family gatherings. In addition, the Yellow School had also used staff meetings to engage in book club and large group article reflections. During these

reflections, teachers were asked to read either a book chapter or an article before the meeting and then discuss and reflect as a large group during the meeting. At the time of my study, the Yellow school was also reflecting on their staff meeting time and determining how they may like to change them.

In addition to staff meetings, at least two times a month small groups of teachers gathered to have reflective discussions regarding an academic journal article. Teachers chose an article from a library of resources in the director's office (see Figure 4.5) or self-selected one and then filled out a worksheet (see Figure 4.6) after they had discussed in their small group. Sometimes, teachers would read the articles prior to their discussions, and sometimes, they would read the article aloud and discuss as they read. Teachers were free to choose what approach they would like to take as long as they discussed with at least one other teacher.

Additionally, Yellow School also paid for their teachers to attend the local annual NAEYC affiliate conference, which included a variety of workshops and sessions. The Yellow School typically attended as a group on a Saturday. These conference hours also counted towards their PD hours for both state licensing and accreditation. According to Jennifer, the director, most teachers were able to attain their required PD hours through the PL offered onsite at theYellow School. Yet, should teachers desire further outside PL other than the local annual NAEYC affiliate conference, teachers were typically responsible for covering the cost to attend. Some teachers at the Yellow School also attended free trainings offered through a local training consortium or were furthering their education. A local community college, in partnership with a variety of funders,

provided financial support for teachers working to achieve their Child Development Associates (CDA). Through this program, teachers could take one course at a time at no cost to them until they completed their CDA.

In addition to these ‘formal’ forms of PL that could be counted towards the teachers annual requirements, teachers at the Yellow School were also given 6.5 hours per week of paid time (a ½ hour before the children arrived and 1 hour after the children departed), designed to provide teachers time to collaborate and discuss topics relative to their classrooms, work on lesson planning/prepping, developmental profiles, documentation, communication to families, article reflections, and their own PL, when children were not present. The 6.5 hours combined with the 1 hour weekly staff meetings equated to approximately 1/3 of the centers payroll hours. The director, Jennifer was also available during this time to meet with teachers. During the hour after the children went home, many teachers collectively met around a staff table in the middle of the school or came and went from their classrooms.

Figure 4.5 Yellow School’s Article Resource Library

Professional Development Article *Read & Review*

CERTIFICATE OF TRAINING for

____

has completed **.75 clock hours (.075 CEU)** of training in the following topic:

It's never too early to begin: Multicultural/antibias education with infants + toddlers (Title of Article)

Please read the article and complete the following questions. Next, meet with a partner to discuss and review the highlights from this article. Finally, turn in this form to the assistant director for final review.

Golden Line

Choose one line or sentence from the article that spoke to you. Your line does not have to be the main point or what you perceive to be the author's agenda, although it could be. Just choose something that was meaningful to you- either because you agreed, disagreed, or it just made you think. Write the line or sentence in the space below and it will be included in discussion at your meeting.

Our main goal as caregivers are to expose children to differences in a positive manner and challenge pre-prejudice in young children as we see it emerging.

Briefly summarize the main point(s) of this article:

- Goals include promoting sense of self, value uniqueness, promote self esteem, expose children to differences, promote positive associations, build awareness of feelings, encourage non-sterotypical activities.
- Integrate childrens culture
- Find teachable moments
- ~~[illegible]~~ professional development

Rate this article: ★★★★☆

Name of Discussion Partner(s) __________

Teacher Signature __________ Date 9/11/17

Administrator Signature __________ Date 9/12/17

Figure 4.6 Yellow School's Article Reflection Worksheet

Sensemaking

When examining how the staff at the Yellow School made sense of the PL enactments within their school, five major themes presented themselves: PL as a core value; PL fosters continual growth; PL should align with program philosophy; PL requires relationships and partnerships; PL as state regulation. Within these themes, I integrate both the director as well as the teachers' sensemaking. By integrating how these stakeholders not only "took in information" but in how they then "fram(ed) it, and us(ed) it to determine actions and behaviors in a way that manage(d) meaning" (Evans, 2007, p. 159), I gained insight into their sensemaking or their 'identity construction' (Weick, 1994) of their PL experiences. In some cases there were some differences in how the Yellow School director and teachers made sense of their engagements, but overall they seemed to express similar understandings.

PL as a Core Value

When examining how personnel at the Yellow School made sense of PL, there was a general conception of PL as being valuable. For example, Jennifer, the director and owner of the Yellow School, was very clear in her articulations that PL was important to her. This was exemplified in numerous ways: dedicating 1/3 of her payroll, pursuing and attaining a Ph.D. in ECE, and providing trainings to other teachers and schools throughout her state. Furthermore, on the Yellow School website, it stated that they "nurture quality teachers with creative resources and support for their continued PD so that they are inspired to provide an amazing preschool experience."

Positioning PL as a foundation for teachers created opportunities for PL to be fostered within the Yellow school and as the director Jennifer further reflected in her interview, created “happiness within their work environment” for teachers. Or as Faith, a teacher added in her interview, this collaboration time allowed her to “feel more confident about being a teacher, because I know that I have support.” PL, therefore, happened often within ‘everyday’ interactions many in which had been intentionally planned. Jennifer added, “One of the things I felt very strongly about was giving teachers paid time outside of their time in the classroom to do things like planning and preparing but also that could incorporate the PD time.” By intentionally providing teachers with daily opportunities to meet with each other, be reflective of their practices, and to collaborate, Jennifer expressed how important this time was for her. Annabelle further communicated that the time provided for daily collaboration at the Yellow School was a commodity that most other programs did not offer. For her, and what seemed to be the other teachers as well, this was “like a blessing to teachers, because I know we don't get that at other schools.” By positioning PL as a core value, the Yellow School was able to foster a supportive environment for teachers to seek support through their collaborations, which ultimately furthered the teachers learning and helped them to feel “more confident” in their work with children.

PL Fosters Continual Growth

As the Yellow School teachers and center leader made sense of their PL engagements, there was an overall defining of PL as an opportunity for continual growth,

whereby PL was conceptualized as a way to support ongoing change for teachers as well as for the classrooms and children in which they worked. For example, Lisa, a preschool teacher, highlighted this as she noted in her interview, "[PL] is anything that enhances or contributes to your... presence in the classroom, the way you are as a teacher. And we hope that you never stop learning, changing and growing and altering it…" For this learning to happen, which, according to Lisa, involved changing and growing, PL needed to happen in diverse ways. For example, this meant that PL was, as Faith, a preschool teacher, noted,

> Any kind of furthering education in regards to helping you become a better teacher, whether that's college classes, conferences, or even what we do here, going through an article together, or just talking to each other. They're all things that make you a better teacher.

Therefore, continual growth for Faith could be developed through various forms of PL.

Furthermore, when making sense of PL, Jennifer, the director, reflected, "My personal definition of quality is that basically you are constantly questioning what you do and reevaluating different aspects, and that is never done." Combined, these teachers and center leader have highlighted the general sense that PL was not only a way to become 'a better teacher' but that PL should create space to 'question' and 'reevaluate' practices to ensure 'quality,' which are key components of IBPL as defined in Chapter 2 (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

PL Should Align with Program Philosophy

While these teachers and the center leader expressed a desire for PL to create space to question practices, there was also a general sense that PL was best if it fell in line with their program's overarching play based philosophy. For example, Jennifer noted in her interview, and the teachers expressed similarly, that it was "challenging to find PL that's of quality" and that aligned with their play-based philosophy. She expressed further,

> For me, I feel so strongly about play and how the research more and more shows how this is the way young children learn best, especially under five. Therefore this should be the basis of our curriculum and I want the teachers to learn more about play theory….So, if they're rethinking [their practices within their PL] they are typically rethinking in comparison to environments that they worked in where those were the norms.

Here, Jennifer highlighted that for her and for her teachers as well that, in most cases, during PL her teachers were learning and altering their prior experiences to be in line with the current play-based practices of the Yellow School, rather than questioning what was currently happening within the Yellow School.

Leslie, a preschool teacher, also highlighted in her interview that finding PL trainings that covered topics beyond those she "already kn[e]w a lot" about was challenging. For Leslie, she felt most trainings did not have much to offer her in the way of new knowledge or in knowledge specific towards a play-based philosophy. Therefore, Lisa added, "It's why I hold my nose and go to the early childhood training that we have

to go to in the spring." Here, Lisa was reflecting how many of the Yellow School teachers found it challenging when attending large conferences or outside trainings in general to find sessions that were valuable to her or that were aligned with the Yellow School's philosophy. While Leslie noted, "You can always learn new things," she still stated that many of the outside trainings she attended were "horrible." She continued, "Trainings put on in a big hotel are fine, but it's a lot of really basic stuff. Like, 'Be sure to greet the children by name everyday when they come to school.'" Combined Leslie and Lisa's reflections on attending large conference-based trainings show how these kinds of trainings were not beneficial for them and further supported Jennifer's sensemaking of outside trainings as well; that most outside trainings lacked new knowledge and/or direct connection to their program's school philosophy.

PL is Impacted by Relationships

In addition to needing to align with their programs play-based philosophy, PL was expressed by the teachers and center leader of the Yellow School to be impacted by the relationships they had with other teachers, their center leader, and the children in their classrooms.

Peer relationships. Annabelle, a teacher, for example pointed to the role she saw other teachers having on her PL. She reflected on this in her group interview with Faith,

> While college classes are really good, because they're interesting and you learn facts and truths about child development and brain development, and all these things I'm fascinated with, having that cross-section of also learning from other

> teachers, where they pull in and say, “Hey. What about this?” And you're like, “Wow, I would have never thought of that.”

Here, Annabelle had noted that her peers’ played an important role in in her PL. As Hill, Stumbo, Paliokas, Handen, and McWalters (2010) noted, collaboration is an effective way to generate high-quality PL. Through having time and space with her peers Annabelle’s PL was further fostered.

Jennifer, the director noted similarly in her interview that, “Teachers learn the most from other teachers. I believe that. To me, the professional development is so many pieces other than just the classes or staff meetings.” Jennifer called attention to the important role she saw peer relationships having on teachers PL. Therefore, the daily interactions during their collaboration time provided the Yellow School teachers opportunities to learn in dialogue with their peers whereby they were able to ‘‘go beyond any one individual’s understanding” and “gain insights that simply could not be achieved individually’’ (Senge, 1990, p. 241).

The daily 1.5 hours provided at the Yellow School created opportunity for teachers to engage in both casual conversation and PL through collaboration and furthered the peer relationships. To highlight this, Lisa and Leslie, both preschool teachers, reflected on the impact of the 1.5 hour planning time, during their group interview:

> Lisa: Because we are able to spend that kind of time together, even while we're getting our planning done or whatever it's kind of a chitchat thing going on, but it's made us close…it makes me happy to come to work because I know even if

I'm having an off day, I can rely on my co-teacher to pick up the slack or I can get good feedback from people in other classrooms... I mean when I hear a kid crying I'll come out here and be like, "Who is that?" And see who it is and does that teacher need support.

Leslie: And I don't feel like people resent that-

Lisa: No, it's not done in a way like, "Oh, you can't handle this."

Leslie: Yeah, like, "Why is he crying?"

Lisa: It feels more supportive like a family…the time in the morning and the time after the kids leave, it really promotes a lot of team building kind of camaraderie-

Leslie: I agree with that. I think a lot of times the most helpful things are the things you hear from other teachers, I feel like a lot of PD wouldn't really be considered formal development at all, which is one of the great things about here is because you do have that time…

Lisa: Because peer support here is crucial.

In this conversation, Lisa and Leslie expressed the value of their planning/PL time before and after the children were present for building their relationships and in turn their sense of community. Within this supportive environment, which as Leslie and Lisa described above, relationships had been built and contributed to not only their PL but also in helping them value others' input, suggestions and/or offers for support.

Furthermore, at the Yellow School the orientation process was noted as supporting teachers' relationships. For example, Leslie noted, "Jennifer is really good at

having people who are new, either come in and observe our room or in the inner room where she wants them to see how it actually works." These relationships among peers seemed to be fostered from the moment new teachers joined through varying opportunities.

But at the same time, Leslie commented, "I like that Jennifer's open to us giving her feedback too about what works and doesn't work. So you feel like you really have impact not just on the children, but on the program too. That it really reflects me, my standards, my goals for myself." She continued in conversation with Lisa in their group interview:

> Leslie: Yeah. I feel like this place is a very receptive to all the ideas that I come up with. As in community gathering instead of circles in a room.
>
> Lisa: Oh, that was your idea?
>
> Leslie: Yeah, that was at one of our sitting out there planning times. And I was like, "I've been thinking about circle time. I really don't like the terminology. I would like words that reflect more of what I do." And so the other teachers jumped in and they were like, "Yeah, that'd be really good. What do you think ... Here's some words, what if ... " They were like, "Well, what do you do?" And I said, "Well, kind of like come together." They were like, "Gather." I'm like, "Yeah, it's like a gathering, to build communities…So they helped me, we came up with that.

Here, Leslie provided a concrete example of how her ideas were not only respected by Jennifer but also how collaboration with her peers provided space for a change in the

language used within the Yellow School; in this case, the teachers moving away from "circle time" to term that better reflected what Leslie saw happening, "community gathering." Combined, these examples highlight how relationships can ultimately foster space for teachers to become the 'leaders' within their PL opportunities as well as within their school community. In turn, how 'ecosystems' that cultivate change within schools can be fostered because the teachers are well versed in the complexities involved with teaching (Douglas, 2017; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008).

Teacher and director relationships. As indicated in the above comments about relationships among peers, relationships between Jennifer, the director and the teachers also seemed to be valued within the sensemaking of PL across the teachers and director of the Yellow School. As Jennifer reflected in her interview, "Then there are also the day-to-day interactions that I have with the staff and that the staff has with each other." Jennifer not only noted the relationships between teachers but also with her as the director. The teachers at the Yellow School stated that these relationships were built within the time Jennifer invested to meet with them as well as respond to their questions and/or concerns. For example, during the hour after the children have left for the day, Jennifer was often found in conversation with a teacher in her office (see figure 4.7). Whether it was to discuss something specific happening within a classroom or collaborating with a teacher on the possible publication of a book they have been collaborating on, Jennifer was typically engaged in conversation with at least one teacher, sometimes a few at a time during this time (observation notes).

Jessica, a preschool teacher, commented on how Jennifer fostered the ability for teachers to approach her through her interactions with teachers from their very first weeks, as she noted in her group interview with Lilian,

> Jennifer was always checking in the first few weeks, really the first month, a lot. You know, "How are you feeling, do you have any questions?" And so that was really good because that was an opportunity to ask any questions that I had and to talk about the philosophy and why do what we do here. So I think having that one-on-one with her in the beginning is pretty important.

Lilian, a two's teacher, added in the same interview, "Jennifer is a world of knowledge. Anytime I have a question or I'm trying to figure out how to address something with family or someone, I always go to her." Combined, Lilian and Jessica described in their above statements how their relationship with Jennifer further fostered their PL as it allowed them to go to her as needed for support and could, as Bruder and colleagues (2009) pointed out, ensure connection to their direct classroom teaching practices.

Kids. Interestingly, Annabelle, a preschool teacher, also added in her group interview with Faith, that in addition to other teachers and center leaders impacting her PL, she believed, "As teachers, we're always growing and learning along with the children too. Sometimes the children have ideas, and we're like, 'Why didn't I think of that?' So, you learn from them as well." To which Faith chimed in, "Whether we know it or not!"

A direct example of such learning from the children was expressed during Leslie and Lisa's group interview. They reflected on intentionally changing the words used within their preschool classroom, as they reflected:

> Lisa: Here's an example, "Leslie we keep saying friends, I think we should say classmates instead because we're not all friends, but we still have to be kind."
>
> Leslie: Partly because the kids were going, "But he's not my friend."
>
> Lisa: "But he's not my friend." And it's true. The kids made me stop. Now my PD moment was a child calling me out on it, "He's not my friend." Absolutely right and I can't make you be friends either, but I can-
>
> Leslie: But, you have to be kind.

Here, Lisa and Leslie described how part of their PL had come from the relationships and interactions with the children in their preschool class. By listening to the children, Lisa and Leslie reflected on their word choice in this case using the term "friends" and changed their practices. It was through having time and space within their PL opportunities for collaborative dialogue that the teachers felt they were able to meet the needs of the children and families directly in their care (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015; Riojas-Cortez, et al., 2013).

Combined, these statements shed light onto how relationships, whether that be with peers, the director or the children, impacted the teachers and the director's sensemaking of PL within the Yellow School. Furthermore, that it was often within simple everyday interactions and conversations that created the most opportunities to both foster these relationships and in turn their PL.

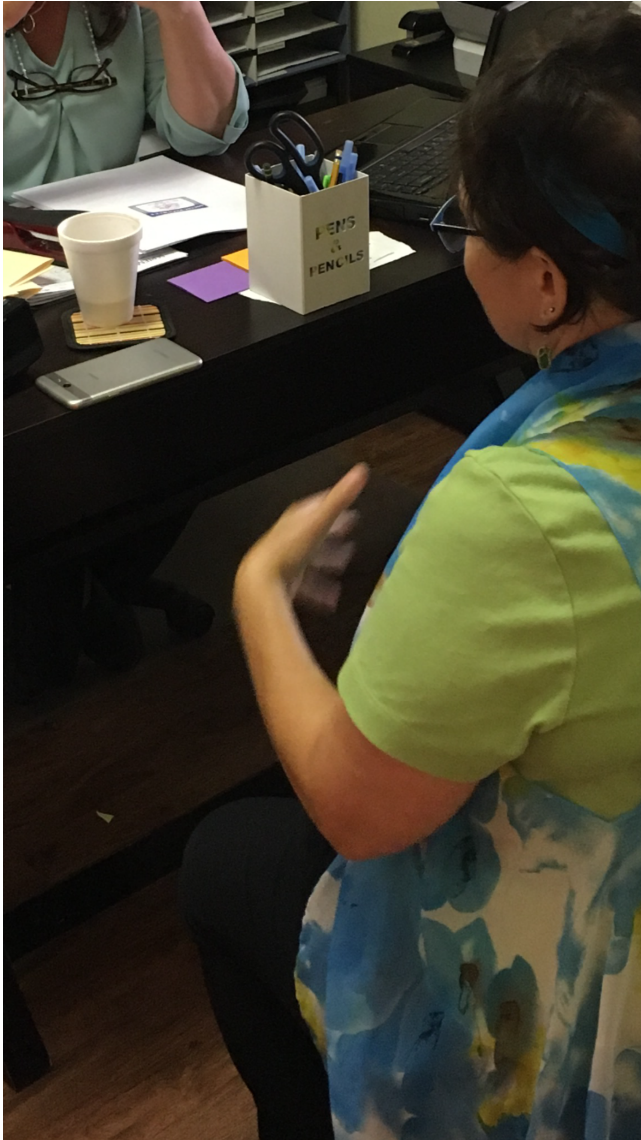


Figure 4.7 Jennifer and Leslie Engaged in Dialogue

PL as a State Regulation

Yet, because of the state licensing regulations in Texas, teachers and center leaders at the Yellow School were required to obtain 24 hours of training annually. Additionally, to maintain their NAC accreditation, an additional 6 hours were required. Therefore, within their sensemaking of PL, the teachers and center leader of the Yellow

School noted that PL was sometimes about obtaining hours and less about what was learned. For example, Jennifer, the director, noted this sentiment when she stated in her interview, "It's…you got to get your hours and that's the most important thing…More than what did you learn, was it interesting? In a perfect world, the directors would be much more supportive in that way I guess." Here, Jennifer highlighted her belief that required training hours should support improving practice rather than solely meeting state licensing or accreditation requirements. Yet, she even admitted to quickly going online herself to be able to "get my hours." For her, it was often about "the formal process of having to show" those hours versus the spaces where she actually felt she attended to her PL. Spaces such as reading current articles or following teaching blogs, or, as was already noted above, within the casual conversations with others.

Additionally, Lilian, a two's teacher, reflected somewhat similarly on attending trainings outside her school to achieve the 30 hour requirement when she stated in her interview,

> Depends on the class. I've sat through some great ones. I've sat through some ... Some just have different philosophies, different teaching styles, and we're very different in what we do compared to a lot of the big business ... So sometimes I sit in them and you know ... Disagree with what I'm hearing. But I've had some really cool ones too.

In this statement, Lilian highlighted how trainings could be hit or miss. Something Jennifer also noted as she reflected on preferring to provide in-house PL than paying for

teachers to attend outside trainings. Jennifer's reasoning was due to the uncertainty of the quality of training teachers would receive outside of the center.

Furthermore, many teachers additionally reflected on the 'value' gained or lack there of by attending the required training hours versus their daily collaborative engagements. Jennifer stated at a staff meeting, "I can't count your collaboration time as your clock hours. That would be cool if I could." To which, Lucia chimed in "Yeah." And Jennifer continued, "I can't. Even though you are probably getting more out of that than listening to me." Yet, the teachers at Yellow school noted that they did respect and valued their directors' knowledge and insights. For example, Zahara, a preschool teacher, at that same staff meeting reflected, "I personally really enjoy hearing you [Jennifer] talk. Honestly, a lot of times ... I really do though. I wish we did it more." Lucia, a pre-kindergarten teacher, chimed in, "Yeah I do too. I like it too." Kennedy, a pre-kindergarten teacher, added, "I agree though because sometimes, something comes about and people with more experience can share their experiences." This conversation was just one of several I was a part of where the teachers at Yellow School reflected on the expertise of their director as well as the expertise of their fellow teachers impacting their PL. Many of the Yellow School teachers noted that they learn a lot from their fellow teachers and wondered why such interactions could not be counted towards their official PD hours required by their state-licensing agency.

Conclusion

In summary, the Yellow School provided both formal and informal PL opportunities. Across the Yellow School, the teachers and the director seemed to have similar understandings and perspectives of their PL engagements, which on the whole appeared to be positive. Teachers seemed to agree that the daily collaboration time was invaluable. Yet, as was noted, this time could not be counted towards their required PL hours to be in compliance with their state-licensing agency or to maintain their NAC accreditation status. By analyzing how as these teachers and center leader made sense of PL in general, a desire for PL to deepen and or create opportunities to question practices was expressed, whether or not they were currently engaging in such practices. The relationships within the center were voiced as an integral part in PL, whether that was with peers, the director, the children or otherwise. Finally, through Jennifer's commitment and expressed desire to provide her teachers with PL, seeing PL as a core value further fostered and enabled such varying experiences to happen.

THE RED SCHOOL

The Red School, located in central Texas, was originally selected based on a referral from an ECE colleague who had reached out to Sage, the executive director of a university-based childcare system that has three centers, and included my initial inquiry e-mail (see Appendix A for a copy of the email). Sage responded and believed she might have a center that could be a "match." Sage and I then chatted over the phone where she talked about the PL that was happening within the Red School specifically. For example, she mentioned that the Red School had an in-house curriculum coordinator (CC) that

worked collaboratively with the center leaders and teachers and provided a monthly Lunch-n-Learn PL on-site. These Lunch-n-Learns were described as opportunities for the teachers to not only obtain their required training hours, but they where also intentionally designed to meet the needs of the teachers directly within each program. Additionally, Sage mentioned annual in-service days that often were linked to their Lunch-n-Learns and opportunities for teachers to take a leadership role within the centers as well. I was particularly interested in the Red School's engagement in Lunch-n-Learns.

While I realized that the engagement did not fully meet all of the components of IBPL, I felt it provided a contrast to my other two schools and would offer insight into yet another way to think about beginning to implement IBPL within ECEC programs, specifically in the Red School's case, at a full day non-profit school. Therefore, I first describe all of the PL opportunities the Red School offered and/or required their staff to attend, and then, I share how the teachers and the center leaders of this school made sense of these varying PL enactments.

PL Offered and/or Required

Teachers at the Red School were required to engage in 30 hours per year of PD to maintain the schools NAC accreditation status as well to stay in compliance with their state's licensing regulations (see figure 4.5 for more information regarding state regulations). To support teachers in achieving the 30 annual hours, teachers at the Red School were provided a few onsite opportunities, which included: monthly Lunch-n-Learns and two days per year of annual staff development days that could be counted

towards these required hours. If teachers attended all of these PL sessions in addition to attending annual CPR and First Aid trainings (also offered onsite), these opportunities would provide them with the required 30 hours of PL. Yet, Lunch-n-Learns were optional, and teachers were not required to attend. While the Red School did not have a set budget amount for PL, teachers were encouraged and financially supported (dependent upon the director's approval) in attending PL offsite as well. At the time of my study, the director, CC, and teachers at the Red School were reflecting on their PL opportunities and working to alter them.

The Lunch-n-Learns were led by the onsite CC and were offered onsite during teachers' lunch hours' 12-1 and 1-2. The role of the CC was to support the curriculum development and PL of teachers at all three schools within this university based childcare system. One of the CC's roles was to develop the Lunch-n-Learn trainings based on teachers' annual professional development goals (see Figure 4.8). The teachers, in concert with their director, created PD goals during their annual performance evaluations. The CC then read them and developed the Lunch-n-Learns based on the teachers' plans (see Figure 4.9 for topics of their 2017-18 Lunch-n-Learn offerings). Lunch-n-Learns were not mandatory, and yet, if teachers did attend, they were paid for their time attending them by being provided comp time to be used at a later date.

In addition to monthly Lunch-n-Learns, the Red School required their teachers to attend two full days of in-service PL annually. During these two required days, the Red School teachers joined with the other two schools within the larger university care system for trainings. The meeting agendas were created in concert with the three directors and

the CC that supported all three centers. Topics were chosen based on reflections from staff's annual performance professional development plans as well as the directors and CC's input. This PL was lead by the directors, the CC, the teachers themselves, or in some cases, outside trainers who were hired for their particular areas of expertise. Lastly, while not counting towards their required PL hours, the Red School also held mandatory monthly staff meetings during the lunch hours 12-1 and 1-2; a lead teacher lunch meeting from 12-1 and an assistant teacher lunch meeting from 1-2. Teachers were given the opportunity to contribute agenda items to these meetings by emailing the director. Also, teachers at Red School each received 2 hours of planning/prep time each week and could request time to meet with their co-teacher as needed.

In addition to the onsite PL provided, Red School paid for their teachers to attend other trainings if they expressed an interest and the director approved it. Meaning if a teacher saw a training or conference they would like to attend, they could bring it to their director for approval and financial support. Receiving funding for these trainings was up to the directors' discretion, and there was no guarantee it would be approved. In addition to outside trainings, there was also an opportunity for the Red School teachers to further their education at the university campus in which they were located; one 3-hour class per semester was paid for by the program. Teachers had to first gain acceptance into the university before they could take advantage of this PL opportunity. While most teachers did not enroll in the university and utilize this 'benefit', many teachers at the Red School did however take advantage of a local training consorption's CDA program; the community college in partnership with a few local funders covered the cost of the

teachers' tuition at the local community college and books upfront for one course at a time to support the teacher's attainment of a CDA. Some teachers at the Red School also attended free workshop type trainings offered through the same local training consorption that provided funding for the CDA.

Professional Development Training Plan for Staff

based on most recent performance evaluation

Name: ______________________ Hire Date: ______________________

Classroom: ______________________ Age Group: ______________________

Training Plan: Staff will receive at least 30 hours of child care training related to the age group they teach per year, not counting CPR/First Aid, Food Handlers, & Transportation. Trainings will be based off the CORE Competencies and is not limited to self-instructional, CDA or CCP classes or college credit hours that relate to early child care.

CORE Competency Needed	Goals	Suggested Training Method	Date Completed

Time Frame to Complete: ______________________

______________________ __________ ______________________ __________

Teacher Signature Date Supervisor Signature Date

Figure 4.8 Red School's Annual Professional Development Goals

LUNCH-n-LEARNS 2017/18Back to the Basics
(Let me know if you would like to be a presenter or help with a presentation for any of these workshops)

MONTH	TOPIC	MAKE-n-TAKE (materials & directions will be available all month for you to use)
September	Parent Communication (this will be sent to you in an email – there will be no actual lunch-n-learn)	
October 10/10=Lavaca 10/11=Comal 10/12=San Jacinto	Incorporating Daily Lessons into Everyday Routines	Flannel Board Stories
November 11/7=Lavaca 11/8=Comal 11/9=San Jacinto	The Magic of Math & Manips	Math Games
December 12/5=Lavaca 12/6=Comal 11/14=San Jacinto	Building up your Block Center	
January January 2	Staff In-Service: Together We're Better	Sensory Bottles
February	Spicing up your Sensory Table	Playdough & Slimy Stuff
March March 12	Staff In-Service: STEAM	
April	What's a Woodworking Center?	
May	Discovery in the Dramatic Play Center	Tutu's & Capes

Figure 4.9 Red School's Lunch-n-Learn Monthly Topics

Sensemaking

When making sense of these various PL enactments within the Red School, five major themes presented themselves: PL views teachers as experts in their field; PL is ongoing change; PL takes various forms; Relationships matter in PL, and PL as a state regulation. As Coburn (2001) posited, individuals make sense within conversation with their colleagues (Spillane, 1999; Hill, 1999) and in ways that are deeply situated in broader social, professional, and organizational contexts (Lin, 2000; Spillane 1998; Yanow, 1996). Within the themes presented here, I integrate the sensemaking of the center leaders as well as the teachers' experiences of PL to take into account the larger organizational context of the Red School and the conversation across both center leaders

and teachers. In some cases, there were some differences in how the Red School center leaders and teachers made sense of their engagements, which I point out below, but overall, these center leaders and teachers seemed to express similar understandings.

PL Views Teachers as Experts in the Field

When making sense of PL, the teachers and center leaders at the Red School appeared to view teachers as ‘experts within the field’ and possessing a wisdom of practice as Shulman (2004) theorized. Meaning for these teachers and center leaders, teachers had knowledge to share, and therefore, the Red School worked to sustain “a supportive workplace that respects individual teaching styles, fosters creativity, and encourages teacher loyalty and professional growth” (the Red School website). Furthermore, Olivia, the director of Red School noted in her interview that they provided, “a lot of opportunities for teachers to get together and have a voice,” and additionally, they provided space for teachers to be “really involved in the program.” The Red School had also fashioned opportunities for teachers to take both participatory and leadership roles within their own PL engagements. For example, Ashlyn CC at Red School, commented in her interview,

> Sometimes, I have other teachers lead them [Lunch-n-Learns]. They need to get that kind of practice for what they want to do in their lives. We have a teacher here who's amazing with her woodworking center. It's just fabulous. I want her to do the Lunch-n-Learn on woodworking. She's got all this experience, and she

> does it for her classroom. Plus, she's working on her master's to learn how to be a director some day.

The assistant director at the Red School, Celia added in her interview, “We utilize the teachers that we have that would like to do a workshop…so we utilize the benefits of having people from different backgrounds” to be able to provide “meaningful trainings for our staff, that are beneficial.” The teachers at the Red School could not only present at the monthly Lunch-n-Learns but also at their annual teacher in-service days. For example Sage, the executive director of all three university based care centers, noted in her interview,

> We have teachers who have never presented information before that are speaking in front of a group, who have put together a presentation with our help. I've seen a lot of confidence building with that...We often forget that some of the experts we're looking for are actually internal to our program.

Here, Sage articulated that teachers should be given opportunities to share their expertise with others, even if that means pushing them outside of their comfort zones and taking risks (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Justice, a pre-kindergarten teacher, reflected on her experiences of providing an annual in-service training in her interview as she stated,

> It gives me the opportunity again to come out of the classroom and move onto a different area. Being able to practice those skills and put those skills into play is huge for me because as I have said [the leadership team] does help and it's just you wanting to do that and putting yourself out there. That helps me a lot and the fact that Olivia and Sage support that, it's a really big deal.

In this statement, Justice not only pointed to the impact she saw the opportunity to present at their annual in-service days had for herself, but she also noted the important role leadership played in supporting her PL.

Furthermore, Olivia, a director, reflected on how her leadership style and belief in teachers as 'experts' had been influenced from her practical experiences working as a teacher both within the university childcare programs and elsewhere. She noted, "I realized that there are just a whole lot of programs that did it really wrong. So when I started to work for Stephanie and Sage at the Green School (one of the three university programs), I realized how different it could be." She continued, "They really did believe in letting the teachers be empowered and involved." These experiences of seeing teachers "empowered and involved" led Olivia to further conceptualize teachers as she noted, as "the experts in their own field" and to respect and acknowledge their various wisdoms of practice (Shulman, 2004). Olivia had adopted this program model for herself and was how she described her current "leadership style." Therefore, for Olivia, teachers need to have opportunities to not only have agency in their own PL but to be seen as capable of having knowledge to share as well (Adair, 2014).

Yet, Olivia also noted in her interview that in order to be able to "give [teachers] the creative freedom to do what they do best and what they love" required her to be "very picky" and "very selective" in her hiring of teachers. She noted further that she needed to be sure "you are really hiring someone who has a love for children, and is not just going to do okay for now, but somebody that you feel like can really grow and develop" (Olivia, Interview). Therefore, agency was not freely given, but rather, it was in response

to an understanding of the teachers' own level of dedication to PL and a commitment to ECEC. Olivia continued,

> We really believe that the teachers are going to make their classrooms their own, and they can do whatever they want, as long as it's with the children's best interest at heart. So we let them do all sorts of things that they probably couldn't do in other programs, and that's why they like being here. That's why I liked teaching, because you really had a lot of free range.

Here, Olivia made the connection that for her, she believed there was a relationship between teachers having agency in their classrooms and PL and their overall happiness with their work. Combined, these center leaders and teachers expressed that within their sensemaking of PL, and for them, it was important to view teachers as knowledgeable. In doing so, space was created for the teachers to be empowered and involved in their own PL.

PL is Ongoing Change

Additionally, within the Red School teachers' and center leaders' sensemaking of PL, there was an overall sense that PL should create opportunities for ongoing change. For example, Justice, a pre-kindergarten teacher, reflected on the need for ongoing change and continual growth as she reflected in her interview:

> Being a teacher, something's always changing, new strategies, new techniques, new ways to present curriculum to work with the children. I really consider that PD is always being connected to having those resources and always being willing

> to learn. Being in tune with what you're doing in the classroom, pulling in other resources, and then also stepping outside of just you and the classroom, to connect with other teachers and find out what's working for them so you can bring new ideas into your classroom.

Justice had noted that ongoing PL was seemingly required to be able to meet the needs of the children in her classroom, which is similar to others' work (e.g., Diamond and Powell, 2011; Koh and Neuman, 2009; Norris, 2001; Rudd et al., 2009). Furthermore, having access to a variety of resources could support new and different learning (Timperley et al., 2007). As Justice continued further, she expressed why she had chosen to further her education. She noted:

> I know for me, one of the reasons why I decided to continue on with school was just to have more of a knowledge base, a wider range of knowledge as to… dealing with families, what's changing in family culture, how are family dynamic's changing, how's that affecting the classroom? Really just having that approach of being willing to learn, being willing to add more to what you already have in your foundation.

For Justice, it was important when thinking about PL opportunities to have access to a variety of perspectives from formal educational knowledge to a variety of teachers' perspectives. Yet, she also noted PL required her to take a perspective of being open herself to learning, and viewing PL as ongoing.

Veronica, a toddler teacher, further noted that even with a degree in ECE, there was still much to learn when she stated, "Okay, with all this money for this degree, and I still do not know what I'm doing.” Ulises, a preschool teacher also commented,

> I'm always trying to stay hungry. I'm happy with where I've taken it certainly …and I hear a lot of praise from colleagues and in the evaluations there is certainly a lot of praise...I try to internalize it but at the same time I know that I can do better. I always feel like I can do more with it, and so it's consciously or unconsciously I have in my mind things that I can do better … It reminds me that however good I'm doing in any other domain I can definitely do better.

Here, Ulises and Veronica articulated the general sense within the majority of the Red School teachers and center leaders--PL was about creating an ongoing opportunity to question and/or deepen teaching practices. Such a framing mimics that of PL as others have posited (e.g. MacNaughton & Hughes, 2007; Nuttal, 2013; Taylor, 2013). Combined these teachers, Ulises, Veronica and Justice, drew attention to the important role they saw PL playing in their teaching practices and furthermore the ongoing nature they saw it requiring, regardless of their prior educational background.

PL takes Various Forms

Furthermore, when making sense of PL, the teachers and center leaders at Red School also expressed that PL could come in many forms. From “continuing education, to just keeping up to date on research and theories about play, and how things run best in childcare,” to “something that is meaningful, and inspiring and forward moving an

individual" such as "meditation or spiritual development" as Sage the executive director reflected in her interview. This "whole teacher" approach to PL as Sage described in her interview, created the opportunity to see a variety of PL enactments as "equally valuable."

In the Red School, one such enactment was their annual in-service days. Ashlyn, the CC, reflected on the joining of their three campuses for their annual in-service days, as she stated,

> It helps [teachers] to work together more than if you're in a room with a whole bunch of people from all over. Now the advantage of doing that, however is you get a lot of good outside opinions that you may not have heard of. "Oh, you guys do that in your center? That'd be so cool if we did that." You do need a combination of both.

Ashlyn's comments highlighted the importance she saw attending a variety of PL opportunities created, both in house as well as with other teachers outside their school community.

Ulises, a teacher, also emphasized how the annual in-service days provided by his school allowed for him to be able to bring content back to his classroom. As he reflected,

> We can brainstorm a way to implement it together, or if it's something very big and daunting, we can brainstorm a way to break it up a little bit. I love having my co-teacher there with me for that exact reason …to find out if she's on board, which way we can change it. Just always looking to adapt it and make it our own. And also just the feeling of cohesion, you know it's great to have people around

> this building that I don't tend to see a lot…So it's great to remind myself that we do have community… learn with them and have that excitement we share versus me going off to the local community college for a training by myself, makes it that much more worth it.

Ulises' reflections on their annual in-service days further support others who have conjectured the benefits and need for teachers to attend PL opportunities with their co-teachers and school communities (e.g., Zaslow, 2014). While the Red School did have monthly Lunch-n-Learns provided onsite, these were done during the lunch hour whereby not all teachers could attend together. Therefore, as Ulises noted above, annual in-service days provided him opportunity to be present with his larger "community" and specifically with his co-teacher, which for him enabled him to think practically about how to take the PL back to his classroom.

Yet, Ulises also noted that in addition to formal trainings, he saw opportunity for PL within the process of training and mentoring new teachers. He noted mentoring required him to,

> Vocalize all the intentionality with every single part of the day, and every single interaction…it really does reignite all that. So trainings are great, in-service is great, but having a shadow, especially a really green shadow that has never had a job before, let alone a job in childcare, has worked wonders.

He continued,

> It reminds me, if I don't have a good answer or a good reason for why I'm doing this kind of exchange with a child, it reminds me to stop doing it. Or if I give a

> shadow all these great reasons why I would approach a problem or a situation a particular way and I don't find myself doing it very often or very naturally, it's something to watch out for. So as far as that vigilance, that self-awareness piece, I found that to be invaluable.

In this statement, Ulises drew attention to the idea that non-traditional forms of PL, such as training a new teacher, were often very meaningful or in his own words, "invaluable." Therefore, for these teachers and center leaders, PL was enacted and not only experienced, but valued within diverse ways. Meaning, the combination and variety of formal trainings to daily actions of mentoring new teachers seemed to be meaningful for these teachers and center leaders within their sensemaking of PL.

Relationships Matter in PL

For the Red School teachers and center leaders, relationships, whether it was with their peers or with the director, seemed important as they made sense of PL.

Peers. For example, Justice, reflected on the sense of community she felt within the Red School as she noted,

> All of the staff are able to reach out to each other...if we need something from each other, we're like, "Hey I have this child struggling with this. Do you have any ideas?" Other teachers have come to me and I've been able to give them extra resources… open door to where we needed extra tips or strategies, techniques. That's definitely there.

Yet, even though there was what she described as a sense of support among her fellow teachers, Justice continued,

> I think it would be great to have more time to do that. Staffing is always going to be a tricky thing in childcare, no matter what. Because really, there always has to be somebody with the children, the children are the main focus of the school. I know that we try really hard to give each other that time. Sometimes, if we're able to we'll have team meetings…during our lunch breaks…in an ideal world, where everything was great, of course there would always be more time. However, sometimes that's just not always doable within a childcare center.

Here, Justice highlighted there was never enough time to foster relationships and engage in collaboration with her peers, even though both seemed to be highly valued for her PL and ability to support the children and families in her classroom.

Ulises, also added the importance he saw having what he termed a sense of "community." As was highlighted above in his reflections on the annual staff development days, he expressed they were helpful in fostering this "feeling of cohesion" and furthermore created opportunities to build his relationships with his co-workers. In addition, engaging in PL alongside his co-teacher was as Zaslow (2014) posited, important in his abilities to take his learnings from his PL experience back and to think about what changes could look like within his actual teaching environment.

Director-teacher relationships. In addition to peer relationships, director-teacher relationships seemed to be an important aspect as well. Ashlyn, the CC, highlighted the

role she saw leadership playing in supporting PL for teachers as she reflected in her interview,

> PD itself means you've got to help them to move forward professionally from where they are, to where they want to be. If you want to be a teacher, that's fabulous. I will teach you how to be the best teacher you can be. If some day you want to own your own center, I'm going to make sure I work on skills to foster that.

Being able to know teachers PL goals requires center leaders to have relationships with the teachers. To do this, within the Red School, Olivia, the director, met annually with teachers to collaboratively create professional development training plans (see figure 4.9). These meetings had helped to support as Veronica, a teacher, expressed, a sense of comfort in her relationship with her leadership. Furthermore, she felt communication went:

> Extremely above and beyond here, because I've had conversations with my director [Olivia], I've had conversations with the big director [Sage]... It's very, very open here, I will say that, very accepting, very open. We're always considering all the angles. I feel like that if any of us ever needs to, "So, how do I handle this?" [For example] I have a situation now with one of my little girls who keeps calling my little boy who has long hair "she". I'm going ask someone, "Okay, what do I do? This is new to me," because we used to say, "Oh, the only difference between boys and girls is a penis," not true, you know? I've got to figure it out, but I feel like here out of all the places, yes.

Here, Veronica expressed feeling supported from her directors. When faced with something she was unsure of, she felt she could reach out for support, which seemed to stem from having relationships with her leadership team. Combined, the teachers and center leaders alike across the Red School, similar to others (e.g., Ball & Cohen, 1999; Bryk, Camburn & Louis, 1999; Little, 1990), noted the important role they saw relationships playing in supporting and fostering their PL.

PL as a State Regulation

Finally, state regulations were brought forth as the teachers and center leaders made sense of PL. Due to the state mandated 24 hours and the additional 6 hours required to maintain compliance with their NAC accreditation requirements, the Red School teachers and center leaders all noted the impact it had on their PL engagements. In many cases, teachers talked about attending PL to meet the hour requirement rather then selecting PL based on personal interest or connection to their actual needs of their classroom. Ulises articulated in his interview, however, that teachers could actually do both, attend trainings and have them be meaningful, as long as they have a sense of,

> Self-determination to pursue whatever I think would make my class environment more enriching or make me a better teacher. You know with input obviously, but reflecting on my own strengths and deficits and really taking the initiative to address those and again with a lot of help or still finding the best avenue to make myself stronger in those domains.

Ulises had drawn attention to the need for teachers to take an active role in their own PL. By first being self aware of the needs of the classroom and then seeking out opportunities to further foster those skills, he believed the required hours could also be personally meaningful. Yet, most teachers expressed they often attended trainings or the Lunch-n-Learns offered by the Red School merely to meet the state/accreditation requirements then being as intentional as Ulises noted.

Therefore, in many cases the teachers and center leaders noted that trainings were not always of quality. For example, Justice reflected in her interview,

> As far as the 30 hours, I think that it's good that we have a required amount of training. Honestly, I don't think it's the amount of training that's an issue, but the quality of training. I know if I could ever make an effect, or make a change, I think I would focus more on the quality…because I really think that there's a huge gap ... They don't meet together, they are not well balanced. Sometimes you can get your 30 hours of training, however, it might not be that good quality training. …[For example,] it's great that we have Lunch-n-Learns to where teachers can come and do their training here in house. However, again, to do quality training within an hour, it's really not always doable.

Justice highlighted that training does not always equate to quality. This heavily researched topic (e.g. Eurydice & Eurostat Report, 2014; Helburn, 1995; NICHD, 2000; Whitebook et al., 1989) seemed to be further reflected in Justice's comments above. She does not seem to mind being required to attend PL but she wanted those hours to be dedicated to "quality". She continued,

> It just depends on how you ... are you just checking off your 30 hours or are you focusing more on the quality of training? For example for me because the Lunch-n-Learns are just like eh, it's basically called "Launch-n-Learn" it's an hour's worth of material. …." I'm looking at quality. I need this kind of training, I need to do that, I'll try to look outside of here to find it.

Therefore, for Justice, similar to Ulises, it really was dependent upon the individual teacher whether or not they would utilize their required training hours for the actual betterment of their practices or not. This was important to note because, as Veronica, a toddler teacher, communicated in her interview, "finding the new stuff out there is really time-consuming." Here, Veronica within her sensemaking of PL, similar to many of the teachers and center leaders at the Red School, often felt she was merely working to complete her required training hours without being intentional or purposeful in what she chose to attend due to time constraints. She continued further,

> Honestly, I'm kind of at that phase right now where ... This is terrible, in my old age…there's so many things that don't really interest me now. Not that I think I know everything, but it's just like, how many times can I sit through how to transition children? You know?

In this statement, Veronica was beginning to articulate how she felt the Lunch-n-Learns offered at her school, while meeting the state requirements, did not necessarily meet her personal PL needs. She added,

> There's just so much freedom to be you [within this school]…it doesn't necessarily match what's available to us to be trained in, if that makes any sense. I

> think they really honor our diverse personalities and teaching styles. I've never been so free to really be the kind of teacher I want to be. We have control within parameters, but they really want you to shine as your own, unique self, which is wonderful.

Yet, she continued,

> Trainings that we're offered are pretty much generic. We're encouraged to go to the Lunch-n-Learns, which is wonderful…[yet] I feel that most of the Lunch-n-Learns, I've been there, done that. I feel like most of my co-workers feel that way too, like, "Yeah, we're getting our hour," you know? That's sad to me because trainings, they're a required thing. We all know that. That's a good thing, but I think that it also can burn people out if they never hear anything inspiring or fresh.

Veronica had voiced that because she, along with the rest of her teaching team were "not new," they "don't need the 101," but rather "something more." Assistant director, Celia further added to the idea that the trainings may not be meeting the teachers needs, particularly the veteran staff as she noted in her interview,

> When people have been somewhere a long time, they're like I know, uh ha, I know. But I feel like if we catered to them, gave them new information, the new cutting edge information they would receive it better. I don't think just being handed information is the best way for training to happen.

Here, Celia, similar to Veronica, voiced that while they appreciated that their school provided teachers the opportunity to meet the state requirements for training they wished

there was more meaning or intentionality placed within them; a sentiment that has been previously observed by other researchers (e.g., Linder, et al., 2016).

Conclusion

In summary, the Red School teachers and center leaders sensemaking of PL appeared to express that teaching and learning were ongoing processes and required continual reflection. Such opportunities should be afforded in their PL opportunities. Moreover, PL could take various forms and should provide teachers opportunity to think about their actual practices and the children and families in which they work with (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015; Riojas-Cortez, et al., 2013). To do this, these teachers and center leaders made the case that relationships mattered. For example, the teachers expressed a desire to have time collaborate with their peers—a struggle often hard within full day child care programs (e.g., Castle, 2016; Mantilla & Kroll, 2018). They and their directors also expressed needing to have a strong relationship between each other in order to support PL. These relationships could not only provide center leaders with insight into the PL needs of the teachers but in turn could also support center leaders in becoming more "fluid and more interactional" within their leadership approaches (Krieg, Smith & Davis, 2014, p.79).

Finally, as these teachers and center leaders made sense of PL, they expressed concern with state regulations, particularly in their view of PL as a 'requirement,' or a box to check off versus a way to reflect/meet their needs within their teaching practices. Therefore, these teachers expressed a desire to move away from the 'banking' (Freire,

2000) forms of PL towards more practices that could offer more intentional, specific and relevent PL to meet their specific needs as teachers and in turn the needs of the children in their care, which are characteristics of IBPL that are explored in the next chapter.

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF PL

While the three individual cases have been analyzed above in relation to how the teachers and center leaders within each case made sense of PL and their experiences within them and their school community, I now provide a cross-case analysis. When making sense of PL in general, the teachers and directors within the three programs of this study integrated both their past and current experiences of engaging in PL while also considering the cultural and political contexts within which they were currently working (Allen & Penuel, 2015; Coburn, 2001; Jennings, 1996). This cross-case analysis is therefore shared to illuminate the lessons learned and make analytic generalizations (Yin, 2014; Stake, 2006). Thus, I work to "convey the most important findings from each" case and combine them as "assertions" (Stake, 2006, p. 41). To do this, I attend to the most significant aspect of each case study, as well as use my own prior, expert knowledge, when looking at all the data across the three cases (Yin, 2014).

Through this analysis, three key themes emerged as the teachers and center leaders made sense of PL: Non-Traditional PL, Requiring PL isn't the problem, the quality is, and PL that frames teachers as capable and competent. I have again integrated both the teachers and center leaders sensemaking together within this analysis for three reasons. First, because generally speaking, the sensemaking across the two groups, while

not identical, was very similar. Second, because sensemaking is a process that looks different for each person, it was therefore important to get an overall sense of the aggregate, particularly when looking across the cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014). Lastly, while Coburn's (2001) work looking at how teachers made sense of policy reforms in relation to reading practices within an elementary school pointed to the influential role leaders can have on teachers sensemaking, particularly within policy changes, I still chose to integrate the teachers and center leaders within this analysis. Coburn (2001) noted that because leaders decide what "messages to pass on," they can influence how teachers makes sense of their experiences (p. 161). While I agree, within these particular cases, there is a conceptual difference. The teachers and center leaders across the Blue, Yellow, and Red Schools were making sense of their PL engagements in general and articulating their understandings of whether or not those PL engagements met their PL needs as ECEC professionals rather than reflecting on a particular topic or reform within or across their PL experiences. The Blue, Yellow and Red School teachers and center leaders therefore made sense of their PL experiences on the whole, rather than of a specific reform or practice within their PL experiences as was experienced in Coburn's study. Thus, integrating the teachers and center leaders sensemaking is needed to understand how ECEC teachers and center leaders conceptualized PL on the whole in order to gain insights across these varying ECEC contexts.

Theme 1: Non-Traditional PL

Combined, across the three cases, as the teachers and center leaders made sense of PL, they seemed to desire non-banking types of PL (Freire, 2000), particularly if they had years of experience and/or degrees in ECEC or related fields. For example, as was highlighted above, they expressed desiring more opportunities to reflect on their own practices including deepening and/or questioning their practice; whereby, PL could create space for ongoing change. Furthermore, they wanted their own voices and experiences to be incorporated into their PL. By having spaces for collaboration and dialogue with peers and center leaders alike, they could talk through how to bring their PL into their individual classrooms. I unpack these ideas further below.

Deepen and/or Question Practice/Ongoing Change

First, when making sense of PL, the teachers and directors of these three programs expressed that PL should create opportunities for ongoing growth rather than being treated as technicians, to be taught certain sets of knowledge to merely regurgitate in practice (Linder, et al., 2016). PL as others have also posited should foster space for teachers and directors alike to talk about and question their practices (e.g., MacNaughton & Hughes, 2007) and/or to deepen their craft. Lisa, a teacher at the Yellow School, highlighted this sentiment in her interview, “[PL] is anything that enhances or contributes to your presence in the classroom, the way you are as a teacher. And we hope that you never stop learning, changing and growing and altering it.” Justice, a teacher at the Red School, also reflected similarly on the need for ongoing change and continual growth as was noted above, “something's always changing…being connected to having those

resources and always being willing to learn, being in tune with what you're doing in the classroom, pulling in other resources…connecting with other teachers." Combined, Justice and Lisa's comments illuminate how collectively these teachers and directors made sense of PL as providing opportunity to continually reflect on teaching practices. Such comments further highlight what others have previously argued (e.g., Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin 1995, Loucks-Horsley 1995) that PL opportunities should offer space for teachers to incorporate and reflect upon their own teaching experiences and environments in order to be able to meet the specific needs of children in their care.

Additionally, for many of the teachers and directors of these three schools, PL should also create space to question practices and deepen teaching practices; a key aspect that has been posited as being important in PL experiences (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Amelie, a teacher at the Blue School expressed this as she commented in her interview, "[PL is] any formalized class or training that deepens your understanding of your teaching practice. It's pretty open…Any contribution to your teaching." Nora, also a teacher from the Blue School, added in her interview, "any experiences that will ask you to question your own practices, or deepen your thoughts about your teaching practices." Or as Ulises, a teacher at the Red School, mentioned in his interview, "I'm always trying to stay hungry...I know I can do better…so it's consciously or unconsciously I have in my mind things that I can do better…" Ulises therefore saw himself as a being "in the process of becoming-as unfinished, uncompleted…and with a likewise unfinished reality" (Freire, 2000, p. 84), or, as Britzman (2007) noted, "an incomplete project" (p. 3). Combined, Amelia, Nora and Ulises articulated the general sense of the majority of

these teachers and directors; within their sensemaking of PL, they saw it as creating an opportunity to always to "do better" by questioning and/or deepen their teaching practices regardless of prior education and or experiences in the classroom. This mirrors Freire's (2000) conceptualization of the acquiring of knowledge, as "emerg(ing) only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 72).

Variety of Enactments

To be able to question and or deepen practice within PL engagements, these directors and teachers expressed as others have also posited a need to engage in a variety of PL enactments (e.g., Schraw, 1998; Timperley et al., 2007). There was not one particular PL opportunity that any of these teachers or directors expressed as meeting their entire PL needs. By having access to a variety of resources could further support their learning, particularly PL that went beyond the "101" as Veronica from the Red School noted. Such a variety was also important to learn how to be able to meet the diverse needs of the children in their classrooms. From formal education to everyday conversations, PL was as Megan, a director at the Blue School reflected, "really important to engage in PD in a diversity of ways." Such diverse PL could be, as Faith, a teacher at the Yellow School, commented in her group interview with Annabelle, "Any kind of furthering education…college classes, conferences, or even…going through an article together, or just talking to each other. They're all things that make you a better

teacher." For these teachers and center leaders, PL should occur in a variety of forms to be able to help progress teaching practices.

Additionally, visiting other schools was also a form of PL these teachers and center leaders expressed as they made sense of PL. Amelie, a teacher at the Blue School, highlighted, that visiting other schools created the space to, "See what other schools are doing, because it helps to bring new techniques into my practice with the kids. And that to me, is really beneficial." Visiting other schools, particularly for teachers such as Taylor, also a teacher at the Blue School, who had not worked in other programs prior to the Blue School, noted in her interview, provided opportunity to "…physically see something else...It is nice to see what other people are doing in our field, and how they're managing." Visiting other schools therefore provided the teachers with alternative perspectives and approaches to working with children and families beyond those they saw on a daily basis within their own school.

Furthermore, Ashlyn, the CC from the Red School, reflected on the joining of their three campuses for their annual in-service days as creating space for the teachers to be with the other teachers they worked with, rather than "a whole bunch of people from all over." Having the opportunity to engage in PL with co-teachers seemed for Ashlyn, and many of these teachers and directors, as something that was important. Yet, Ashlyn further highlighted the important aspect of engaging in a variety of PL opportunities as she noted that they provided opportunity to "get a whole lot of good outside opinions that you may not have heard of." Therefore, for Ashlyn, and the other teachers and center leaders, they "need(ed) a combination of both;" PL opportunities in house, as well as PL

provided by outside resources/teachers. Nevertheless, within many of the teachers' sensemaking across the three programs, they further expressed value in attending outside trainings with co-workers rather than attending alone, which was similar to Zaslow's (2014) findings that also highlighted teachers desire to attend trainings with their co-teachers.

Dialogue

Consequently, as these teachers and directors made sense of PL, they also expressed a desire for it to provide opportunities to talk and dialogue with their peers; a 'best practice' that has been argued for within PL experiences (e.g., Linder and colleges, 2016). It was within these collaborative conversations where teachers made sense of their variety of PL experiences and in turn could consider ways to put into practice what they may have learned, or brainstorm alternatives to align and meet their program, children, and/or families individual needs. For example, Zoe a teacher at the Blue School reflected on attending round tables within the RITC with her co-workers as was previously noted above, "We were very inspired…talking about stuff and trying to figure out how we could do it at our school... it's more beneficial when we go as a staff verses when we go by ourselves." Lilian, a teacher at the Yellow School, also commented similarly that attending trainings with co-teachers and having time to dialogue could support implementation. She reflected in her interview on how attending the annual NAEYC state affiliate trainings with her co-workers had sparked a group interest in making changes to their playground and fostered space for them to try "to organize the playground based on

that." By attending the conference together, they were able to get "really excited" and "come back and talk about the classes we went to."

Ulises, a teacher at the Red School also added, how the annual in-service days provided by his school created the opportunity for him to be with his co-teachers and his "community" which enabled him to not only engage in PL but, engage in ways that allowed him to "brainstorm" and conceptualize actually implementing such practices in his classroom. Again, a level of "excitement" was expressed through having a shared PL experience rather than attending training on their own. For Ulises, the teachers, and center leaders across the three schools, the shared experiences seemed to make "it that much more worth it." Furthermore, by only attending outside conferences together, but also having time and space to further dialogue with their co-teachers after attending was also needed; whereby such dialogue could in turn support and foster changes in their teaching practices (Mockler and Groundwater-Smith, 2015).

Yet, time for dialogue was not only desired following attending outside trainings. As Jennifer, the director of the Yellow School, noted in her interview, "teachers learn the most from other teachers…PD is so many pieces other than just the classes or just the staff meetings" it is "the day-today interactions…that the staff has with each other." For Jennifer, the dialogue and conversations amongst peers was a valuable PL resource and therefore she provided such time for her teachers to collaborate on a daily basis. Ulises, a teacher at the Red School, added similarly to this sentiment in his interview that, "really there's nothing like it," in reference to role collaboration and dialogue with other teachers played within his PL.

Combined, as these teachers and directors made sense of PL, they called attention to not only having opportunities to question their practices, but also attending a variety of PL opportunities. Within and following all experiences, they also wanted to engage in dialogue with their co-teachers so that a sense of togetherness and a sense of community could be built. Eager to move away from PL experiences that merely made 'deposits' but rather conceptualized teachers as being continually 'in-progress,' becomings who engage, interact and through dialogue not only acquire knowledge but are able to contextualize and in turn implement changes in their own school's context (Chia, 1995).

Theme 2: Requiring PL isn't the Problem, the Quality is

For these teachers and center leaders, the content that was examined within their PL experiences mattered. Particularly so in Texas, where the teachers and center leaders of the Red and Yellow Schools were required to obtain annual PL hours to stay in compliance with their state's licensing regulations. The teachers expressed often obtaining PL hours to stay in compliance rather than feeling like they were meeting their own specific PL needs. Similar to what others have found (e.g. Linder et al., 2016), the teachers sensemaking across these three schools highlighted that PL experiences should therefore be directly applicable and connected to their teaching practices. While there was an overall general sense that PL was valuable, the teachers wanted it to be 'quality' or as they defined: connected to their practice and be reflective of both their own education/experiences and the needs of the children and families in their programs.

Meeting Regulations

In CA, where the Blue School was located, while teachers were required to have more initial ECE units to qualify to work in a program or to be left alone with children, there were no ongoing annual PL requirements. Yet, for the Yellow and Red Schools specifically, they were required by their state's licensing regulations to obtain 24 hours annually of PD. Therefore, as the teachers and directors in the TX schools made sense of PL, they specifically noted it was sometimes about obtaining hours and less about what was learned. For example, as was already expressed above, Jennifer, the director at the Yellow School, reflected on how it was often about "get(ting) your hours…More than what did you learn, was it interesting?" Such a statement emphasized how these teachers and center leaders noted within their sense making of PL that training hours should support improving practice rather than solely meeting state licensing or accreditation requirements.

Furthermore, similar to what others have noted (e.g., Nicholson & Reifel, 2014), often, for the Red and Yellow schools teachers and center leaders, trainings that met annual licensing compliance PL hours where often hit or miss and did not always meet their PL needs. Lilian, a teacher at the Yellow School, reflected on attending trainings outside her school to achieve the 30 hour requirement when she stated in her interview, "It depends on the class. I've sat through some great ones. I've sat through some ... Some just have different philosophies, different teaching styles." Therefore, because outside trainings could be "hit or miss" in their 'quality' or ability to meet the needs of the teachers, as Lilian a teacher at the Yellow School commented in her interview, center

directors such as Jennifer often preferred to provide in-house PL than pay for teachers to attend outside trainings.

Yet, even when PL was offered within their schools, the teachers and center leaders of the three schools acknowledged it often still did not meet their PL needs. Whether that was because they were an experienced teacher with a degree in ECE such as Veronica from the Red School who was looking for her leadership to "consider who their audience" was and move beyond the "101" trainings to more fully support her PL, or an experienced teacher such as Holly from the Blue School who was looking for more direct trainings to support her in implementing her programs Reggio-inspired philosophy. While they appreciated that their schools provided various PL opportunities which enabled them to meet the state requirements for ongoing training hours (within the Red and Yellow Schools), the teachers still wanted their PL experiences to be of 'quality.' They desired more meaning and intentionality to be placed within the PL experiences so that they could be better supported as teachers, and in turn support the children and families in their care.

Quality PL

Therefore, for the teachers and center leaders of the Yellow and Red Schools specifically, it was not so much about the required number of hours of training but rather the quality in which they received that was important to them. Justice, a teacher from the Red School, as noted above, highlighted this well in her interview, "I don't think it's the amount of training that's an issue, but the quality of training…there's a huge gap...They

don't meet together, they're not well balanced.” Justice highlighted, as others have found (e.g., Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991) that training did not always equate to ‘quality’ or improved teaching practices. For Justice, similar to the other teachers and center leaders across these schools, she did not seem to mind the required PL hours but rather believed that those hours should be dedicated to ‘quality’ PL; meaningful PL that was directly related to her teaching practices, that offered new information and/or opportunities to reflect deeper on her own practices rather than merely being provided ‘how-to’ information.

Still, even though the Blue School teachers and center leaders did not have a state mandated requirement for obtaining ongoing PD hours, they also wanted their PL to be meaningful. For example, most of the teachers and center leaders of the Blue School reflected positively on attending the RITC round tables. They found those to be inspiring and impactful towards their own teaching practices as was highlighted above. While not required, attending the round tables was seen as valuable within their sensemaking of PL and highlighted how attending PL opportunities such as these were appreciated even when not required because they provided a meaningful experience.

Space for Both, Quality and Meeting Regulations within PL

Ulises, a teacher from the Red School, and Taylor from the Blue School articulated that teachers could actually do both: attend ‘quality’ trainings that met their specific needs while also meeting their state licensing requirements. Doing so required teachers however to have a sense of “self-determination to pursue” trainings that would

make their “class environment more enriching or make” them “a better teacher” as Ulises noted in his interview. He further reflected required a sense of self-reflection and a sense of self “initiative to address” those areas and find “the best avenue” to ensure this happened. Teachers therefore, according to Ulises, needed to take an active role in their own PL by first, being self-aware of the needs of their classroom, and then seeking out opportunities to further foster the skills.

Similarly, Taylor noted how taking ECE courses at a local community college to meet the CA teacher requirements to be left alone with children and be considered a ‘teacher,’ expressed that “even if I didn't have to take ECE classes, I would want to anyways. Just because ... It really makes me happy to be learning in a class … it's like I'm bridging a gap for myself.” While Taylor was required by her state licensing agency to obtain the ‘ECE units’ to be able to be left alone with children, she “doesn’t mind it.” Similar to Ulises, pursuing higher education was impactful to Taylor’s teaching practices, and therefore, she valued her engagement with it--regardless of it being required or not.

Yet, while teachers like Ulises and Taylor noted feeling indifferent to the required hours, on the whole, as the teachers and center leaders made sense of their PL, most felt that rather than merely obtaining hours to meet state requirements or because they were required by their school, PL should be about the quality, what was learned and its applicability to their actual teaching practices. Such quality seemed to be defined as a sense of connectedness to actual practices or perceived needs of the teachers themselves; a notion that has been previously defined as being key in providing effective PL as well (Zaslow, 2014).

Theme 3: PL that Frames Teachers as Capable and Competent

In addition to non-traditional forms of PL and quality PL, within these teachers' and center leaders' sensemaking of PL was an expressed view of seeing teachers as capable and competent. Or as Zoe, a teacher from the Blue School highlighted in her interview, positioning teachers as "professionals," meaning that "You're like a scientist you're doing inquiries you're making discoveries you're not just taking care of children. And being a professional … (means) going out there and seeking information to make your practice better." Such a positioning of teachers as "professionals" who should continually focus on improving practice, underscored the level of respect towards teachers that was expressed within these three programs teachers' and center leaders' sensemaking of PL.

By viewing teachers as capable and competent, it enabled these programs to foster PL opportunities geared towards further supporting continual growth, "creativity" and "their individual teaching styles" (the Red School website). Furthermore, because teachers were given opportunities "to get together and have a voice" as Olivia, a director at the Red School, noted in her interview, or as was observed within the Blue and Yellow Schools PL engagements, teachers were able to be "really involved in the program." Fostering such environments seemed to stem from the directors' conceptualizations of teachers as both life long learners and as beings capable and competent with knowledge to share as well.

The directors of the three schools in this study created opportunities for their teachers to take leadership roles within their own PL engagements. This further

positioned teachers as capable and competent or as the ‘experts’ in their field. As was already highlighted above, both the Red and Blue Schools utilized their teachers differing areas of expertise or interests. At the Red School, this included leading Lunch-n-Learns, at the Blue School, this included leading collaborative inquiries and at both the Red and Blue Schools this included presenting at annual in-service days regardless of education or experiences. At the Yellow School, in addition to providing teachers with daily opportunities to have agency in their own PL, Jennifer, the director, mentioned in her interview how she had encouraged staff to take the lead on offering parent workshops so that they could share their ‘expert’ knowledge with parents. The assistant director at the Red School, Celia’s statement captured how across these three schools they do this by utilizing “the teachers that we have…we utilize the benefits of having people from different backgrounds” and provide “meaningful trainings for our staff, that are beneficial.” Furthermore, Jennifer’s statement that “teachers learn the most from other teachers” added similarly, and therefore, by providing teachers opportunities to collaborate, dialogue and share their varying knowledges, space was created for authentic PL that could meet teachers needs and in turn the children in their care.

Amelie, a preschool teacher at the Blue School, reflected that having such opportunities to lead and to “take a risk” in a “safe place” within their annual in-service day, as was highlighted above, was important as it allowed her to learn from and with others and further fostered a sense of leadership for her within her school. Justice, a teacher at the Red School, also reflected on her experiences of providing an in-service training as she stated in her interview, “It gives me the opportunity to come out of the

classroom...It's huge for me because as I have said [the leadership team] does help... the fact that Olivia and Sage support that. It's a really big deal." In this statement, Justice not only pointed to the impact she saw presenting at their annual in-service days had for her personally but also the important role her leadership team played in supporting her PL.

By providing opportunities to lead trainings/workshops further illuminated the value these programs placed on teachers' varying expertise's'. Furthermore, Justice and Amelie's reflections highlighted how PL can further foster leadership skills within the teachers. By fostering the leadership of all teachers, these programs were working towards laying the foundation for an "ecosystem" that would be conducive to fostering "transformative change" within each school; such transformative change that could support a more just society for all rather than merely reproducing the status quo (Douglas, 2017, p. 85).

Conclusion

Overall, across these three programs, within the teachers and center leaders sensemaking of PL, there were varied experiences and understandings of PL. However, by looking across all three schools, a few key aspects of PL were articulated as being important or significant in authentically supporting the teachers and center leaders PL needs.

First, nontraditional forms of PL were expressed as being desired. From having opportunity to question and deepen practices, to creating space for ongoing change, these teachers and center leaders noted that a variety of PL opportunities were needed.

Specifically, PL that moved beyond the "101" trainings and created more space for dialogue. Dialogue both within the PL offered at each school, as well as opportunities to dialogue following attending outside PL with peers. Having opportunity to collaborate and discuss with their peers made PL experiences not only more impactful but also supported teachers in being able to put new leanings into their actual teaching practices, in addition to creating and fostering a sense of community within their school.

Second, the 'quality' of the PL opportunities, be it traditional or non-traditional, was important for the directors and teachers whereby the content covered within their PL experiences mattered. As these teachers and center leaders made sense of PL, they expressed that in order for PL to valuable it needed to be specific to and reflective of the actual teaching environments of the teachers. For PL to be considered 'quality,' it needed to meet the needs of the children, families and communities of the actual classrooms the teachers worked in. There was an expressed difference between merely complying with and meeting state standards versus having access to PL opportunities that met the specific needs and supported the teachers in their daily teaching practices. While it was noted that both could happen, it seemed to require teacher ownership whereby the teacher had to actively seek out their own opportunities to meet their needs.

Finally, when making sense of PL, the teachers and center leaders across these three programs highlighted how viewing teachers as a source of knowledge could support and foster environments that were supportive of all teachers' PL. These teachers and center leaders noted the importance of viewing teachers as capable in contributing to their PL and in fostering "ecosystems" that could support ongoing change. Such PL seemed to

require director support and a perspective of viewing teachers as knowledgeable beings who had knowledge to share.

By coming to understand how these center leaders and teachers made sense of PL in general, insights were gained into what types of PL they described as being important to them. Furthermore, their statements begin to illuminate how these types of PL align with IBPL practices. I examine and reflect on this in Chapter 5. I do so by presenting the IBPL engagements of each case, and similar to this chapter, I provide a cross-case analysis that takes into account the key learning's from this Chapter as well as what was learned by analyzing their IBPL practices specifically.

CHAPTER 5:

Inquiry-Based Professional Learning

INTRODUCTION

In chapter 4, the variety of professional learning (PL) opportunities each school engaged in was presented, as was the teachers' and center leaders' sensemaking of those engagements. The goal within this chapter is to understand how the center leaders and teachers across these three schools made sense of their experiences engaging in a variety of inquiry-based professional learning (IBPL) opportunities specifically. Therefore, within this chapter, I address my second research question: How do school leaders and teachers make sense of IBPL?

To do this, I first present individual case analyses of each school, the Blue, Yellow and Red Schools (Stake, 2005). I start by showing how within in case, the teachers and center leaders described their IBPL experiences and then share how they made sense of and described their experiences. Next, after analyzing the three individual cases separately, I present a cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014). Through this cross-case analysis, I hoped to, as Weick and colleagues (2005) noted, answer the question of "what's the story" and how did it emerge "from retrospect, connections with past experience, and dialogue among people who act on behalf of larger social units" (p. 415).

By bringing the three cases together, the "dialogue" surrounding IBPL in ECEC spaces can be further deepened. Furthermore, the question of "now what?" is also addressed, as the "presumptions about the future, articulation concurrent with action, and projects…[became] increasingly clear as they unfold[ed]" (Weick et al., 2005, p. 413).

Therefore, through the joining of the three cases, all implementing varying forms of IBPL, broader understandings into possibilities for other programs to work towards implementing more IBPL is made possible and the "ecosystem" that was fostering and nurturing of such practices can be highlighted (Douglas, 2017).

THE BLUE SCHOOL IBPL EXPERIENCES

While several of the Blue School's PL opportunities contained components of IBPL, I have chosen to focus on the 40 minutes of weekly collaborative inquiry the Blue School engaged in because I believe it aligned most closely with IBPL as defined in Chapter 2 (see figure 2.1). The 40 minutes of collaborative inquiry were held during the Blue School's required weekly staff meetings (one for their infant/toddler teachers and one for their preschool teachers). Teachers proposed topics of interest (typically writing them up on their respective age group's meeting boards located in the staff room) and took turns leading based on who proposed the topic idea and personal interests (See figures 4.1 and 4.2). Topics could continue as long as the group felt it was useful/interesting (Eva, E-mail communication, 11-9-18). There were no rules about how the material was to be covered (i.e. readings, activities, discussions); the teacher leading the inquiry made those choices. Finally, at the end of each topic, there was a feedback session about how it went. Some examples of recent collaborative inquiry topics include, The Image of the Child (2 times), Observing Children (Tools and Philosophy), Working with Challenging Behaviors, Anti-Bias Work (hair and gender with toddlers), Anti-bias work with parents, Descriptive Review (2 times), Reading Books with Children that are

Challenging to You (stereotypes, mainstream characters, sexism, history, etc.), Progetazionne and Making Learning Visible.

When examining the Blue School's teachers' and center leaders' sensemaking of their experiences of their engagement in these collaborative inquiries, mixed feelings were expressed. Of the teachers and center leaders I interviewed (n=7), four noted an overall positive reflection (Amelie, Megan, Eva and Nora), one was a bit negative (Holly) and two were on the fence and expressed mixed emotions (Zoe and Taylor) about this type of inquiry. To "connect the abstract with the concrete" of how these teachers and center leaders made sense of their engagements in IBPL, I separate their experiences into what they liked (Positives) and what they did not like (Negatives) (Weick, et al., 2005, p. 412).

Positives

Below are some of the positive aspects the Blue School teachers and center leaders expressed as they made sense of their experiences engaging in collaborative inquiry.

Impacting and Relevant to Teaching Practices.

First, several of the teachers commented on how the collaborative inquiries either did or potentially could have a direct impact on their teaching practices, which as others have posited (e.g., Zaslow et al., 2010) is a key aspect of effective PD opportunities. For example, Nora, a teacher, noted during her interview,

> I think it makes us critically look at our teaching practices. I know I've changed a lot as a teacher since I started at the Blue School. Just because of the different kinds of conversations. It's not just your boss telling you "Hey, the way you're doing that is not the way we want you to do it at this school." It's all of us coming together and talking about why it might be better for the children if we approach it a different way. Those kinds of conversations, more than just top-down "Hey, do it like this," make us all better teachers.

Nora's comments expressed that for her, learning from her peers was valuable or seemingly more impactful on her teaching practices than merely taking direction from her center leaders--particularly in ensuring the children in her program got their needs met, which moves away from the 'top-down'-expert/novice perspective often present within traditional forms of PD (Linder et al., 2016). Through the collaboration and dialogue that took place with and amongst peers during their collaborative inquiries, teaching practices, according to Nora, could be both challenged and changed.

Megan, the co-director, also commented on how she saw collaborative inquiries impacting teachers teaching practices at the Blue School. She stated in her interview, "The collaborative inquiry allows us to do what we do with intention, to look at something over time, in depth, and in meaningful ways that can have an impact directly on a teacher's practice." Not only were "the topics really directly relevant" to teachers' practices, but they also provided the Blue School's teachers with agency as they determined both the topics and led the discussions themselves. Agency, which could allow for what Adair (2014) theorized as capability expansion rather than merely

achieving a predetermined and defined goal or outcome in ways often typical of traditional forms of PD (Zaslow, et. al., 2010). Furthermore, these IBPL opportunities were directly relevant and meaningful to their particular context and local actors (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al., 2015).

Zoe, a teacher, also commented on how the collaborative inquiries had allowed her to connect with her teaching practice. For example, she noted in her interview, “Right now, we are focusing on the image of the child and they're using our classroom experiences, so they'll say ‘Oh, bring a picture of the image of your child what you think it is’, and you're not just talking about it, you know?” Or as Amelie, also a teacher, added in her interview, “Something about the personal reflection like actually changed something in my practice.” Further supporting the idea that IBPL provides space for critical reflection and in turn can support changes in practice (Riojas-Cortez, Alanís, & Flores’, 2013). The ability to connect these inquiries to their direct experiences - both personal and professional - the teachers and directors of the Blue School noted their collaborative inquires had a “direct impact on the program” (Megan, Interview).

Even when the collaborative inquiry was more philosophical, such as the “Image of the Child,” Megan added, “the focus is on connecting that directly to practice.” For Megan, because the teachers engaged in collaborative inquiries in a “number of different ways … readings, looking at photographs, or through video…not just one modality,” inquiries not only “bring different learners into the process” but provided teachers at the Blue School opportunities to change and alter their practices and work to connect the topics being covered directly to their teaching practice. Even when teachers, such as

Taylor, who noted that even though she “somewhat hates” collaborative inquiries, she still felt she “will always learn something…Even if I do have a sucky attitude.” Combined, these teachers and center leaders expressed that a positive aspect of their collaborative inquiries was the ability to connect it back to their actual teaching practices, regardless of their attitude towards the inquiries in the first place.

Critical or Differing Perspectives

Another positive that was mentioned regarding collaborative inquiries within these teachers’ and directors’ sensemaking of their IBPL practices was the idea that they “expose teachers to learning that they might not seek themselves” (Megan, Interview). For example, both Megan, the co-director, and Eva, a teacher, mentioned a particularly impactful former collaborative inquiry the preschool group had engaged in several years back regarding gender identity development (see Figure 5.1 for a page out of the book that was created during this collaborative inquiry). Eva reflected on engaging in this particular collaborative inquiry in email communication (9/22/17). She wrote,

> We have done a few collaborative inquiries on gender expression and identity. One teacher led one a few years ago when one boy in his class kept dressing up in "girl" clothing after the other boys in the group had stopped (4 years old), and the other boys started telling him he shouldn't do it any more. The teacher wanted to explore how he could support the class through this, and we worked on it with him for about a month. We ended up making a book as a whole school with

> photos of people in our community who wear non-traditionally gendered clothing. We still have it and use it as a resource with the children.

Megan further reflected on this same inquiry in her interview,

> I think that probably half of the staff would not have exposed themselves to that learning or that topic on their own. They just wouldn't have thought of it, but it's so important…it changed the way we are able to talk about trans issues, and the knowledge base we have as a staff about gender solidity, which makes it more inclusive socially to be a parent, teacher, or child here.

Megan and Eva highlighted that while the topic of gender identity was not one all teachers would have chosen for themselves, it allowed them to explore and think about working towards more "socially just and diverse ways of knowing, being, and doing" (Curry & Cannella, 2013, p. ix).

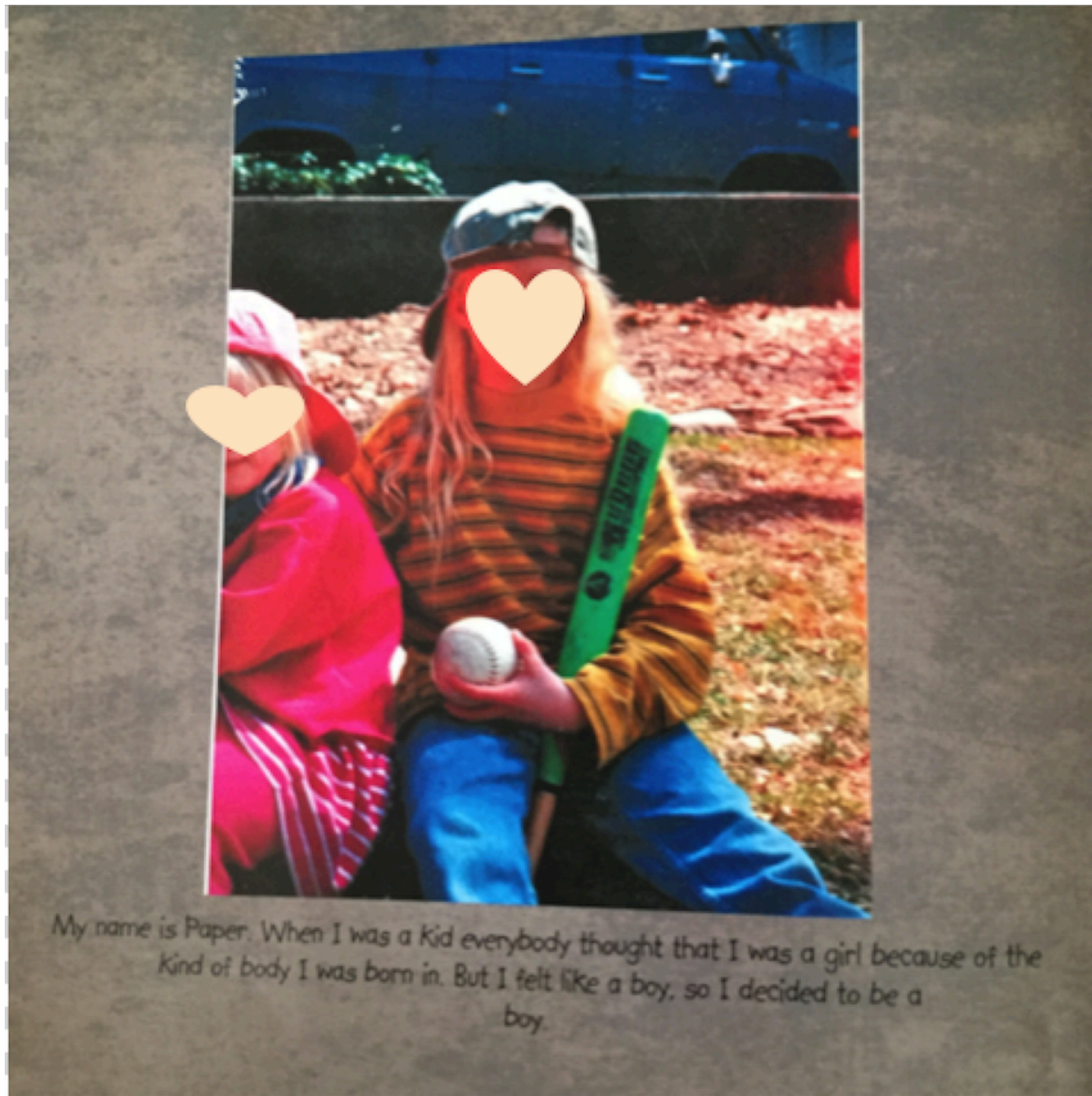


Figure 5.1 Book Created During Gender Identity Collaborative Inquiry

Megan shared a few additional examples of how their collaborative inquiries had created opportunities to engage with critical or differing perspectives. She reflected on two inquiries in particular, one that explored "critical reading with young children" done with the preschool teachers and one inquiry that explored Magda Gerber's RIE philosophy with the infant/toddler teachers. She continued,

> I don't think that many of the preschool teachers would have chosen the critical readings' topic, although all of them were like, "yes, this is great. I don't know why we haven't done this before. This is the best collaborative inquiry ever, because now when I'm picking up a book, I have so many different ways of thinking about the importance of this reading and strategies for asking open ended questions”

Here, Megan highlighted how, from her perspective, the collaborative inquiries provided teachers opportunity to explore topics beyond those they may personally choose, particularly “critical” topics that push teachers beyond their comfort zones, or, as others have noted, these inquiries created a space to challenge the status quo and open up topics typically perceived as taboo within ECEC spaces (e.g., Goodnough, 2011; McGregor, et al., 2010). Taylor, a teacher, also reflected on the critical reading inquiry topic in her interview as she stated, “It was amazing…that's one of the ones where I was like, ‘I wish we could've spent more time on this.’ Because I felt like it was really valuable, and the conversation that was coming out of it was so rich.” Nora, also added,

> It was really cool. It made a lot of people question ... Because I think at the beginning, Elizabeth was just like "What do we do with these books that we don't like? Do we read it differently and just change the words to something we like? Or do we read it the way it is and then talk about it with the kids? Or do we just throw it away and not have it here if we don't believe in what it's saying?" And I think we left that collaborative inquiry with a list of tools on how to handle books like that when you come across them. With different strategies to stop in the

> middle and say "This part really makes me think, what do you think about that?" And those kind of questions. So we came up with a list of strategies for difficult books, or books that we find difficult.

Here, Nora called attention to how within their IBPL practices opportunities were afforded to challenge taken for granted 'truths' of teaching, learning and schooling and supported the teachers in being more comfortable with the unknown (Moss, 2014). Combined, Megan, Taylor and Nora brought to light how by offering new knowledge, possibly knowledge teachers did not even know they were missing, space was created for all involved to grow. Furthermore, these teachers' and center leaders' sensemaking of their IBPL experiences adds to others work (e.g., Castle, 2016) that has highlighted the difficult task of providing teachers enough time to engage in IBPL practices and support the dialogue and conversations such critical topics generate.

Working Alongside Directors

In addition to peer collaboration as was noted in Chapter 4, the collaborative inquiries also created space for the directors to work alongside and with the teachers. Whereby, it positioned the teachers, as Amelie highlighted, "as an equally contributing part of the team." She continued in her interview, "Our director participates in them just like I do even when they're not leading." This 'equal' participation seemed for Amelie to articulate that there was "no hierarchy of people who get to lead" which then allowed for the "sharing the responsibility to learn and take that forward." Here, Amelie emphasized that for her collaborative inquiry provided her opportunities to lead along with her

directors and possibly break up the top-down hierarchy typical in most ECEC programs and PL experiences (Fenech, Sumsion & Shepherd, 2010).

Director Megan further commented on the leadership role teachers' play within collaborative inquiries as she stated in her interview,

> It also allows the teachers to have more skill and knowledge about a particular topic to teach adults, which helps them learn and grow. And, to be seen as a resource in the teaching community on that specific topic...So, it spreads the teacher's leadership in a more…democratic way.

As Nora made sense of engaging in collaborative inquiries, she also highlighted the impact she saw the framing and positioning of the teachers within the Blue School had on the teachers PL. She noted during her interview,

> We're respected as teachers in the same way all the way around. Instead of having teacher assistants and head teachers, it shows we can all learn something from each other and that's a really important message, I think. When you start off as a teacher at the Blue School, to see that "Oh, I can teach you guys something and I can learn something from you, and I can learn something from you." That's really cool.

Nora's comments underline the notion that the Blue School's joint collaboration within their IBPL practices further positions teachers as knowledgeable beings; whereby, all teachers have unique 'wisdoms of practice' to share (Shulman, 2004). Combined, Amelie, Megan and Nora drew attention to the idea that within the Blue School's collaborative inquiry practices, teachers were given opportunity to lead and share their

differing areas of expertise. Such leadership within and amongst teachers as others have noted (e.g., Douglas, 2017) can create opportunities for transformational change (Moss, 2014).

Negatives

While the directors and teachers named many positives to participating in collaborative inquiries within their sensemaking of their IBPL practices, not all of the teachers felt this form of IBPL was impactful or meaningful for their teaching practices. Many teachers felt alterations or changes in either the structure of the meetings themselves or in the foundational requirements of the teaching staff could improve the usefulness of these collaborative inquiries.

Requires Relationships

For example, as was noted within Chapter 4, relationships and partnerships across the board were identified as being important for PL in general. Within collaborative inquiries specifically, Holly, a preschool teacher, further expressed a need to "even the playing field;" meaning, within her sensemaking of IBPL, for inquiry to work, teachers needed to feel open and able to pose questions and queries without hesitation. Holly was getting at the idea of having a sense of "community," or similar to what others have theorized (e.g., Kitchen, Ciuffetelli Parker, & Gallagher, 2008; Gallagher, Griffin, Ciuffetelli Parker, Kitchen, & Figg, 2011), a safe space that could foster an environment that would be supportive of inquiry practices. For example, she shared during her interview that she often did not want to share during staff meetings because she thought it

would not benefit her peers; they may already know how to do whatever she was wondering about, so she did not want to waste their time. Furthermore, as was mentioned in Chapter 4, Holly also noted in her interview, “It's kind of hard to have an even working environment when one person feels more experienced than the other.” To create this “even working relationship” with her peers, Holly mentioned that she “just needed more time.” Combined, within Holly’s comments there was a desire for relationships with her peers; relationships that over time could help foster her engagement in their collaborative inquiry practices.

Additionally, Taylor added during her interview, that doing a collaborative inquiry on “group dynamics” might be meaningful for her. She continued,

> I would like to talk about group dynamics more. Like, how we relate to each other. I feel like that would be really important. Which we do from time to time, but we use the same old tricks, and I feel like there are different things that we could do. That would keep it fresh, and that would build the team.

Combined, Taylor and Holly drew attention to the idea that an important factor in being able to engage in meaningful collaborative inquiry was having a sense of comfort within their community to allow for vulnerability with peers. Therefore, within their sensemaking, Holly and Taylor conceptualized this ‘level playing field’ coming from having good working relationships and a sense of being a team within the school community; something others (e.g., Vangrieken, Meredith, Packer, & Kyndt, 2017) have also posited.

Prior Education and Experience

In addition, within most of the teachers' sensemaking of IBPL at the Blue School, it was expressed that to engage in collaborative inquiry, it required a certain level of experience and/or education. The directors did not mention this point. Yet, for the teachers, such as Amelie, they highlighted how the "life maturities in the teachers and experiences" seemed to impact teacher's engagement in collaborative inquiry. Amelie reflected further on her personal experiences,

> I get more out of the collaborative inquiries now then I did before because I've matured and I think when you're newer and or less experienced … it can be hard to see collaborative inquiry time as impacting your practice and it kind of feels like a chore, like it's taking away from things that you could be doing instead.

Here, Amelie, was making sense of the IBPL practices her school engaged in as more meaningful for her now having been at the Blue School for a few years. She noted that while she currently saw the inquiry practices impacting her teaching practice it was not always this way. She continued further, "It takes a couple of cycles or even a couple of years to really figure out how to take advantage of that time."

In addition to actual lived experiences of engaging in the collaborative inquiries themselves as Amelie articulated, Zoe, a teacher, reflected somewhat similarly, as she stated in her interview,

> Back in the day, the Blue School used to have a lot of experienced teachers, highly experienced teachers…and now, they're not hiring people with a lot of education currently…so I think those teachers need a lot of PD skills, they still

> need to attend classes, they need to be mentored, they need to find their own voice, they need to find their own way, what they believe in, and so when they're thrown into a system like ours, I think it gets overwhelming … so we're spending a lot of time going backwards, which is fine, but we have a lot of us here that have a lot of experience in what were doing. So I feel like it doesn't help the school overall, grow.

Here, Zoe noted that for the structure of the Blue School's democratic approach, and for collaborative inquiry to work, teachers needed a certain level of education and experience to keep the program moving forward. Furthermore, she also voiced that when all teachers do not have an understanding or foundational grounding of early childhood education to work from, there seemed to be a lack of depth in what topics they could cover within their inquiry collaborations.

Depth

Building upon the level of education and experience needed to engage in collaborative inquiry within the Blue School teacher's sensemaking of IBPL was a desire for the collaborative inquiries to go deeper. Again, this sentiment was only heard from the teachers - not the directors. For example, Taylor, commented, "I like the collaborative inquiries, in theory, I just wish that they…were more dedicated towards, diving in a little bit deeper, and exploring more aspects of where we can go on one subject." She continued,

> You get three weeks to do a collaborative inquiry, and it's like, well, that's great, if it's a boring collaborative inquiry that nobody really cares about. But that sucks if it's like, "Oh, this collaborative inquiry is really good," and it gained a lot of momentum. It would be nice to continue exploring. Exploring it longer, perhaps could give us an opportunity to go deeper. And to expand on what we want to know. I mean, I don't know about other people, they seem to enjoy it. For the most part, I'm not that into it.

Here, Taylor called attention to the 3-week guideline surrounding collaborative inquiries, which she noted seemed to impact the level of depth the teachers and directors could reach when exploring a particular topic. In some cases, as Taylor noted, a short time frame was good, but when a topic of inquiry might be more engaging, she would have liked opportunity to further explore it by extending the number of weeks spent on that particular topic.

Furthermore, both Zoe and Holly, who were now preschool teachers, formally toddler teachers and part of the infant toddler (IT) staff meetings (the Blue School teachers follow continuity of care), expressed a strong opposition to how the IT staff meetings were run, which ultimately impacted their engagement (or lack thereof) in their IT collaborative inquiries. For example, as Zoe reflected in her interview on her experiences in IT last year, she noted,

> I thought the staff meetings were ridiculous. They were... just the amount of business we were going through and when we got to the inquiry topic, it was just such a short amount of time, that we weren't really able to go deeper.... It was just

time that I was being thrown information at, listening to like "Oh yeah, somebody wants a new trash can in this room. And I just felt like I could be doing something else.

Zoe noted that due to the lack of time dedicated or actualized to engage in the collaborative inquiry portion of their staff meeting often kept the IT teachers from going into any depth within their topics and made the meetings - and specifically the inquiry component - feel like a waste of her time. Yet, Zoe also commented that being with the preschool group now seems to be " a little bit better." She continued,

> Even though they have similar structure to their meetings, I think the people who are in [the preschool group] are a little bit more assertive to keep the ball rolling, and not let people interrupt. The collaborative inquiry has been really great in [preschool]…[yet] it is still a short amount of time and they're trying to cover so much, that it doesn't really allow you to dive in deeper.

Zoe's current experiences in the Preschool collaborative inquiry group had seemed to offer her a counter to her IT collaborative inquiry experiences. Still, she noted that the 40 minutes was still a very short amount of time for teachers to engage deeply into any one topic. Therefore, Zoe mentioned that she wished there was more time for collaborative inquiries, specifically more time to discuss issues personally relevant to the teachers and their teaching practices.

To clarify this point, she reflected on her previous school within her interview. She noted,

> When I worked at the University School…we had [a staff meeting] every Wednesday, and we would just briefly talk about business, and then we would talk about a subject that the teachers wanted to know more about. We were an infant toddler program so if they wanted to know how to handle tantrums or how to handle help with developing relationships, we would just spend an hour and a half talking about that, so I felt like I got more from that because there was more time.

Here, Zoe highlighted that for the teachers to be able to go into depth during their collaborative inquiries, more time should be dedicated.

Combined, while there were many suggestions within the Blue School teachers and center leader's sensemaking of IBPL on how to further improve collaborative inquiries, most teachers and directors seemed to agree that there was potential for the IBPL collaborative inquiries to be beneficial to the teachers, children, families and the community in which they worked. Such improvements included placing a focus on building relationships and a sense of community within the school and ensuring teachers had a foundational base of knowledge in ECE either through formal education or years experience in the field. Additionally, more time needed to be dedicated within staff meetings to be able to dive deep into topics of interest and create space to move beyond surface level discussions and allow the teachers the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue.

YELLOW SCHOOL EXPERIENCES OF IBPL

The Yellow School teachers' and center leaders' engaged in two different types of IBPL experiences: *article reflections* and *daily collaboration times*. Article reflections required teachers at the Yellow School to meet at least two times a month in small groups to have reflective discussions regarding an academic journal article. Teachers chose an article from a library of resources in the director's office (see Figure 4.5) or self-selected an article from another source and then filled out a worksheet (see Figure 4.6) after they discussed it within their small group. Sometimes, the teachers read the articles prior to their discussions, and sometimes, the teachers read and disscused the article together. Teachers were free to choose the approach they wished as long as they discussed the article with at least one other teacher and completed two article reflections per month. The time spent on the article reflections could be counted towards their required state and accreditation PD hours.

Teachers at the Yellow School were also given 6.5 hours per week of paid time when children were not present (1/2 hour before the children arrived and 1 hour after the children departed); designed to provide teachers time to collaborate and discuss topics relative to their classrooms, work on lesson planning/prepping, developmental profiles, documentation, communication with families, article reflections, and their own PL. The director was also available during this time to meet with teachers as they desired/needed. During the hour after the children go home specifically, many teachers collectively met around a staff table in the middle of the school or left their classrooms to seek out other teachers to collaborate with. This hour after the children left is what I refer to as the

Yellow School's daily collaboration time. While this time did not count towards their state or accreditation hours, I considered it to be an IBPL activity because it met several of the components outlined in chapter 2 (see figure 2.1).

In general, the teachers and the director of the Yellow School had an overall positive outlook towards their engagements with both the article reflections and the collaboration time. As with the Blue School, I will begin by sharing the positives and then the negatives expressed within the teachers' and directors' sensemaking of these IBPL practices at the Yellow School.

Positives

I first share the positive aspects expressed by the Yellow teachers' and center leader's sensemaking of collaboration time, followed by the article reflections.

Collaboration Time: Learning From Each Other.

Many teachers and the center director saw the daily collaboration time as offering opportunity to get advice or suggestions from other teachers. For example during their group interview, Lisa and Leslie reflected on their collaboration time,

> Leslie: …I think a lot of times the most helpful things are the things you hear from other teachers, I feel like a lot of PD wouldn't really be considered formal development at all, which is one of the great things about here is because you do have that time...and a lot of times you're just venting
>
> Lisa: It's not just venting because it's constructive.

> Leslie: Right. And sometimes people will have a suggestion that you haven't thought of. Sometimes very obvious things, then you're like, "Wow, why didn't I think of that?" So that's a nice thing to have.

Furthermore, these teachers also expressed their daily collaboration time allowed them to partner with both their current co-teacher as well as to check in with a child's previous teachers should they have questions or concerns. For example, Lisa noted in her group interview with Leslie,

> I can't tell you how often I go back and be like, "I have a kid who used to be a Hummingbird." And I'll go to the hummingbird teachers and say, "Did this ever happen? Did you have this kind of a feeling? How did you handle this?" And it's really good to be able to get that kind of feedback and insights from their prior teacher.

Lisa also reflected on being able to get support when she had questions specifically concerning a child's development. She noted that having the daily collaboration time allowed her to engage in these conversations with other teachers who were willing to "stop what they were doing to help me." I observed this in my observations of their collaborative time as Lisa and Jane discussed a particular child in Lisa's class who had recently transitioned from Jane's classroom. Lisa had some concerns about the child's development and was discussing further with Jane (Observation Notes, 10/30/17). Through these statements and observations, the important role collaboration time played within their sensemaking of IBPL was highlighted; particularly in being able to support and meet the needs of the specific children in their classrooms.

Similarly, the daily collaboration time allowed for teachers to dialogue and engage in conversations surrounding their work with children, as others have also posited (e.g., Vangrieken, et al., 2017). Jennifer, the director noted during a staff meeting (9/6/17),

> I see teachers who are newer going to teachers who have more experience asking them questions and ... I always love those conversations because I always wanted that more myself as a teacher. Like if you hang out after work you can talk to somebody but here it gets to be incorporated into your paid time, which is nice.

To which, Harriet, the assistant director, and Charlotte, a pre-kindergarten teacher, chimed in:

> Harriet: That's why you give it to us because it's amazing.
>
> Charlotte: I think people love nothing more than to solve a practical problem that they are having on a day-to-day basis.
>
> Harriet: Yeah.
>
> Charlotte: Like you often times go to class and learn about theories and things that are sort of abstract and you feel are kind of far away from you or ... But it's always so gratifying to have a problem or a situation that is or could be frustrating and be able to work on solving it, that's going to affect your daily working conditions ... it's really, really important.

Here, Charlotte and Harriet further suggested how the collaboration time allowed opportunity for the Yellow School teachers to gain insight and support into the real life challenges they faced on a daily basis in their classrooms through dialogue with their

fellow teachers. For Jennifer, she valued this time and therefore had intentionally created the time and space for teachers to learn from each other.

Opportunities for such dialogue also brought to light the challenge teachers can have in transferring theoretical knowledge learned in their teacher preparation programs into their actual classrooms, as researchers have previously noted (e.g., Biesta, 2000; Korthagen and Wubbels, 2001; Lortie, 1975; Vanderlinde & Braak, 2010). Yet, as Charlotte highlighted, having time to collaborate with peers was beneficial in implementing changes and solving day-to-day problems.

Combined, these examples demonstrate how the collaboration time offered at the Yellow School seemed to be conceptualized within their sensemaking of IBPL as an invaluable resource for the Yellow School teachers and director. There was not one teacher who shared anything negative about the collaboration time as they made sense of their IBPL practices. While the director, Jennifer, noted that some teachers often got used to the time and then requested more, all teachers seemed to appreciate and value the time that was afforded to them. For this time, as they expressed, allowed them to get advice or suggestions from other teachers, to question their practices by listening to others, or merely feel supported and part of a community that could offer support should they need it.

Article Reflections: Dialogue

In regards to the article reflections specifically, most of the Yellow School teachers and center leader seemed amenable to these as well. For example, Leslie

reflected in her group interview with Lisa that even though "it's hard to come up with really meaningful PD, I do feel like reading the articles and discussing them amongst ourselves are probably some of the least painful ways." To which Lisa added, "Not that it's like, 'Oh, joy.' But it's way better than going to any of those conferences." For Lisa and Leslie, they seemed to express indifference to the articles. Yet, they again drew it back to the idea that it was within the dialogue that made the articles valuable, as Lisa added, "Articles for me are just like planning in a classroom, like that little planning sheet that we have to do. It's just a jumping off point. And so the best thing about those articles is that we do them together and the conversation that they generate." Because, for her, "every once in a while, somebody will be inspired and they will be like, 'I read an article' and they want to share it. And I think it's the shared conversations." Therefore, it was within the dialogue that the articles fostered that value was found for Lisa.

Lilian also reflected during her group interview with Jessica on the impact she saw dialogue playing in the article reflections. She noted, "Usually, when we meet, we're kind of in agreement about what we liked or didn't like. But it is interesting sometimes if someone interpreted it differently… That can be interesting to discuss." Differing viewpoints and or experiences seemed for Lilian to add to the depth of the conversations. While the articles may have just been a "starting" point, they still formally encouraged and fostered conversations and dialogue amongst the Yellow School teachers, which the teachers seemed to value.

Furthermore, Jennifer added during her interview that the ways in which the Yellow School engaged with the articles had morphed and evolved over the years,

moving from individual teachers reading and discussing with the assistant director, to the collaborative reading and discussions that were happening currently. She noted that these changes came in response to working towards creating more opportunities for teacher dialogue. She reflected that, "because they're reading it out loud, there's a little bit of interruption because someone will comment, 'What are you kidding?'" but these interruptions seemed to create the space for conversations to happen. Combined, as the teachers and the director of the Yellow School made sense of their article reflections they collectively noted that it was within the collaboration and dialogue that made them so personally valuable and applicable to their teaching practices.

Article Reflections: Outside Knowledge

The article reflections also provided the Yellow School teachers with what Lilian termed, an "outside source" of information. Differing information from what they got from the trainings Jennifer, the director, provided. Jessica also noted in her group interview with Lilian that for the most part the article reflections were "pretty effective and efficient." Yet she continued,

> But a lot of that's dependent upon the quality of the articles and how current they are. I haven't really paid attention to that, I know some of them are at least 10 years old. But some stuff is still current. It depends what it is. But it's really well organized and I appreciate that.

Combined, within these teachers' sensemaking of their IBPL experiences, they expressed that while they did not love doing the article reflections, they did find the articles

provided opportunities for them to be exposed to new knowledge, were conversation starters, and furthermore, were not the “horrible” outside trainings they may have attended before or would be required to attend if they did not engage in the article reflections.

Negatives

There was really only one negative expressed within the Yellow School teachers’ and the director’s sensemaking of their IBPL practices; the fact that their daily collaboration time could not count towards meeting the PD hours required by both their state and their NACC accreditation standards. Their statements aligned with what others have posited (e.g., Hill et al., 2010; Nicholson, 2011): that valuable learning happens within the conversations that take place during their collaboration time with their peers. In many cases, for these teachers and the director, they seemed to conceptualize that more learning happened during those conversations than in formal trainings such as conferences. Lisa and Leslie highlighted this in their group interview,

> Leslie: I feel that it's the most valuable time, but we realize that it doesn't actually count.
>
> Lisa: It's why I hold my nose and go to the early childhood, whatever that thing is that we have to go to in the spring.
>
> Leslie: Yeah. Well, that's why I like the articles so much is because in theory that will replace that and again, I think the most valuable part of the articles is in fact-
>
> Lisa: The discussion.

Leslie: ... the collaboration.

Therefore the Yellow School teachers and director appreciated the time given to them for their daily collaboration so much that they thought it should be able to count for their required PL hours. They conceptualized it as supporting their learning, and in turn, the children in their play-based program, more effectively than attending outside trainings.

Overall, the Yellow School teachers conveyed positive reflections within their sensemaking of their IBPL practices: *daily collaboration time* and *article reflections*. While they found their daily collaboration time to be an invaluable resource, they desired for that time spent to be counted towards their required PL compliance hours to meet both their state licensing and their accreditation requirements. This was not because they needed 'validation' that the collaboration time provided PL opportunities, but rather, they did not want to have to seek out and attend additional PL opportunities to stay in compliance with licensing regulations when they felt their PL needs were already being met within their program. Furthermore, while reading articles provided a source of outside knowledge, the teachers of the Yellow School acknowledged that such "new" knowledge also created further opportunities for dialogue and reflection amongst their peers, which for them, seemed to be important.

RED SCHOOL IBPL EXPERIENCES

The Red School teachers' and center leaders' IBPL experiences were found within their engagements in their monthly Lunch-n-Learns. The Lunch-and-Learns were offered and led by the onsite curriculum coordinator (CC) during teachers' lunch hours

from 12-1 and 1-2. The overall role of the CC was to support the curriculum development and PL of teachers at all three schools within this university based childcare system. One of the CC's roles was to develop the Lunch-n-Learn trainings based on teachers' annual professional development goals. The teachers, in concert with their director, created PL goals during their annual performance evaluations (see Figure 4.9). The CC then read over those goal sheets and developed the Lunch-n-Learns based on the teachers' plans (see Figure 4.10 for topics of their 2017-18 Lunch-n-Learn offerings). Lunch-n-Learns were not mandatory, and yet, if teachers did attend, they were provided one hour of comp time to be used at a later date. Additionally, the hours counted towards their annual state licensing compliance PD hours.

In general, upon learning more and observing the Lunch-n-Learns, I came to find that, on the whole, several key defining components of IBPL, as defined in Chapter 2 (see figures 2.1 and 2.2), were missing from their Lunch-n-Learn experiences. However, in many cases, as the teachers and center leaders made sense of their engagements in the Lunch-n-Learns, they too highlighted these missing aspects. As I have done previously with the Blue and Yellow Schools, I will explain the sensemaking processes of the directors and teachers of the Red School organized by the overall positives and negatives collectively expressed within the Red School teacher and center leaders' sensemaking of their Lunch-n-Learn experiences.

Positives

I first start by articulating the positives the Red School teachers and center leaders expressed within their sensemaking of their experiences engaging in Lunch-n-Learns.

Onsite

For the teachers and center leaders of the Red School, a major positive to the Lunch-n-Learns was the fact that they happened onsite and during the teachers' working hours. As Rhoda, the assistant director, highlighted in her interview, "The teachers can come during their work day, which is really important to them. It's so hard to be at work all day, and then have to go somewhere after work to do trainings. So we offer that." This meant that the teachers were provided opportunities to complete their required PL hours without having to give up their out-of-school time, and the teachers and center leaders seemed to see this as a strength. As others have articulated this convenience is a key aspect of effective PL (Zaslow et al., 2010).

Sage, the executive director further added in her interview,

> We also recognize that teachers work hard and we want to make sure they have opportunities to do those hours on work time if that's important to them. By doing Lunch-n-Learns, even if they're not great right now…means nobody should have to go get training on the weekend or in the evening, unless there's something that they really want to do or feel inspired about.

Veronica, a teacher, further expressed this idea in her interview, because "finding the new stuff out there is really time-consuming," she noted that she would often attend the

Lunch-n-Learns to simply get her "hour." Similarly, Justice commented in her interview that sometimes if she was in need of hours, the Lunch-n-Learns could provide her with "training hours," and therefore, she would say, "let me go." Combined, the Red School teachers and center leaders called attention to the idea that offering onsite Lunch-n-Learns was helpful in achieving their PL hour requirements, even if they did not feel like they particularly met their individual PL needs.

Basics are Good Sometimes

Furthermore, while the Lunch-n-Learns did get described as 'basic' trainings by both the teachers and center leaders, sometimes, as Gabi, a preschool teacher noted in her interview, the Lunch-n-Learns also created an opportunity for a "refresh and then you're excited about taking it back...There's just so much that you do forget, the little things that you have to turn around and look at." Ulises, a preschool teacher, also noted in his interview, "The trainings, if nothing else, afford me the opportunity to monitor how much energy I have not just to do the job, but to keep pushing myself to do better. At the moment that's still there and driving me." Combined, Ulises and Gabi highlighted that while sometimes the Lunch-n-Learns were not filled with ground breaking or new knowledge, they still provided teachers opportunities to think and reflect on their teaching practices. For Gabi, it meant thinking about old practices and making them new again, and for Ulises, it meant self-reflecting on his investment and commitment to his work with children.

Negatives

Nevertheless, as the teachers and directors of the Red School made sense of their engagements in the Lunch-n-Learns, there was an overall sense that something more could be added.

Looking for Depth

First, within most of the teachers and directors at the Red School's sensemaking, they generally acknowledged that the current state of their Lunch-n-Learns was not fully meeting the needs of the teachers. Specifically, the Lunch-n-Learns appeared to be missing what could be classified as depth; or the opportunity to dive deep into a subject, to dialogue, critique or discuss issues that were personally significant for the teachers, their current classrooms, and their students and families. As others have posited, (e.g., Mockler and Groundwater-Smith, 2015), depth and relevance are key aspects of IBPL needed to address larger social justice inequities (e.g. Dahlberg, 2016; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Canella, 1997; Moss, 2016). Justice, a pre-kindergarten teacher for example was looking for more depth in Lunch-n-Learns by seeking opportunities to talk about topics that impacted the classroom-learning environment on a deeper level. She stated in her interview,

> I put myself in a different category than some of the staff because I have been here for ten years and I have prior experience. I'm looking for a little bit of a different type of training…I think I would be looking for something a little bit more in-depth, something where ... a higher level type of training…how children

> process things, how children learn and process new information. Different learning theories, really focusing on those.

Justice emphasized that for her she was interested in having more opportunities to dive deeper. Particularly to be able to move away from trainings, as Grace stated in her interview, that were often "about how to improve your reading center...it's like, we've all seen all that, truthfully, most of that you can get on the internet. A lot of times it's just not anything that you haven't heard." Combined, the Red School teachers and center leaders, as Justice and Graced highlighted, were looking for the Lunch-n-Learns to move beyond direct instruction (i.e. the make and take types of trainings currently being offered) towards providing more opportunities to engage in PL that offered them a new and/or different perspectives or theories to consider.

Dialogue

The Red School teachers and center leaders appeared to be looking for more dialogue and more opportunities to collaborate within their Lunch-n-Learns. For example, Veronica, a toddler teacher noted in her interview,

> It's just kind of like rote, like, you get a PowerPoint and it's read to you…could they maybe send it prior, and let us look at it and then come with questions? Or something, because I can read…The dialogue is missing, the conversations and the collaboration with your peers…

She continued, "We don't need the 101. We need something more." Or, as Grace also noted in her interview, "As far as the Lunch-n-Learns... there's really not much discussion

about what the topic is." She added that at a previous school which she did note was a "a much smaller setting" they had more opportunity for "discussion about the particular problems we were having" within their trainings and with their director, which she noted "was helpful." Such dialogue and opportunities to make direct connections with practices have been offered as being a key aspects in supporting both effective PL as well as IBPL opportunities (e.g., Hill, et al., 2010; Zaslow, 2014). Combined, Veronica and Grace articulated a desire for more opportunities to engage with the material, whether through dialogue with their peers surrounding the provided topic or being afforded the opportunity to bring their own personal classroom experiences into the conversation as well. Such findings further support prior work (e.g., Cordingley, Bell, Thomason, & Firth, 2005; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Westheimer, 2008) that has posited teacher collaboration as a way to encourage teacher learning.

Justice further offered suggestions on how to make the Lunch-n-Learns more meaningful and impactful as she reflected on receiving feedback from a family that the center was not representing Black history month and the center's response. She noted in her interview,

> I remember that we had a quick spiel about, 'We need to celebrate Black history month.' I think everybody left with more questions than they did the answers because it was kinda, 'Okay do Black history month and you need to have this and that.' Wait a minute, it's not just putting up a poster, it's not just saying, 'Everybody look at Black history month.' Because you also want be sensitive to the culture and you want to be sensitive to doing it right and not making it like ...

> Let's just celebrate it because…Things like that, where I think sometimes we're more reactionary than we are proactive.

Here, Justice noted that for her this was just one example of how a parent's concern was met with a surface level or 'Band-Aid PL' response rather than authentic IBPL that could have created the space to explore the concern with the depth it deserved and in turn meet the needs of the children, families, and communities in which they worked (e.g. Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015; Riojas-Cortez, Alanis, & Flores, 2013). As she continued in her interview, Justice suggested that creating more time for teachers to not just hear a lecture on "diversity" but to have opportunities to dialogue and consider what change might look like in the classroom would be more meaningful for her and in turn the children, families, and community in which she worked.

Furthermore, Justice, also reflected in her interview in ways that aligned with what others have noted (e.g., Corsaro, 2015). Specifically, that children not only co-exist in our society, but they are completely aware of what is happening around them and are making sense of it, regardless of whether or not adults acknowledge it. Therefore, within Justice's sensemaking of their Lunch-n-Learns, space was needed to allow for such conversations to take place. She provided a specific example within her interview,

> When the university was going through, are we having guns on campus? Not on campus? You know, kids are kids and they always try to build something and make it into a gun, they are like that. I had said, 'Oh we're not going to make guns in class, remember, no guns at school.' That's always been a rule for years since I've worked here but I've never had a child tell me this, 'Actually, you can, it's

> open carry.' I was like, 'Wow! How do you know this?' Again, I don't think parents are sitting there going, 'Hey, guess what? Laws have changed.' They pick it up, and as a teacher you have to be on top of that. You have to know, especially when you're working with that age group (Pre-K)…so yeah, you're going to run into stuff like that and I wish we as a school would make that part of our training and our curriculum.

Here, Justice used a real life example that illuminated her desire for more dialogue and more opportunities to discuss how to have conversations with children regarding their current socio-politico realities. She also pointed out that, as a teacher, she wanted to stay "aware of the outside world" to in turn be able to support the children in her classroom.

Justice further suggested in her interview that if her administration realized and acknowledged that, "There is more that we could be learning in the classroom and a lot of what we do as teachers, is not actually about what we do in the classroom. It's not all about the activity per se." Here, Justice articulated that to make changes and bring depth to the Lunch-n-Learns would require her center leaders to recognize and appreciate that teachers need more than surface level knowledge. Moreover, relying on banking forms of PL (Freire, 2000) limits dialogue around the issues that may currently be impacting the children in their classrooms and society rather than engaging in IBPL practices that offer opportunity to open up 'unwelcome truths' and create an open-ended platform to allow for more voices to be heard and, in turn, alternative viewpoints, ideas, and challenges to the 'norm' (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015).

Listen to Staff

To make Lunch-n-Learns more impactful, Veronica, a toddler teacher also suggested merely listening to teachers. She reflected in her interview,

> I think asking us what we want, and hearing that. I feel like they hear what we want a lot of times, but consider who their audience is. We're not new. I don't think any of us are new to this, and so we need to up it a little bit.

Veronica went on to say that because there were “three locations, and we're all so different, but we're getting the same trainings at all three,” made the Lunch-n-Learns “kind of hit or miss.” Furthermore, Grace noted in her interview that she does not go to the Lunch-n-Learns because “I don't find them to be that beneficial...If it was something I was really interested in I would go, but the ones lately it's not something I have interest in.” For Grace, she was currently pursuing her CDA and so her course work provided her with the 30 hours to meet the state’s licensing and accreditation requirement; as such, she did not need to attend. That being said, she noted that she would have attended the Lunch-n-Learns had there been a topic of interest to her. She suggested, like Veronica, that the center leaders, “talk more to staff, and find out and get a consensus and if there's one particular theme that keeps coming up, then maybe that's something that should be addressed.” Combined, Veronica and Grace called attention to the idea that there seemed to be a lack of connection to the perceived needs of the teachers at the Red School and the actual Lunch-n-Learns provided.

Sage, a director, also commented in her interview that while the Red School had started “listening to our staff” and had “create[d] our own PD opportunities,” these

opportunities were still working to move beyond the "surface level" and create opportunity to "get a little deeper" - especially for their "seasoned teachers." Sage's comments summed up the teachers' reflections well. While Lunch-n-Learns had created the opportunity for teachers to complete their training hours onsite and during working hours, these teachers and center leaders seemed to acknowledge jointly that further changes were needed to make the Lunch-n-Learns more meaningful, and in turn, more impactful for the children and families of the Red School.

Combined, as the Red School teachers and center leaders made sense of their Lunch-n-Learn experiences, they seemed to desire change. While they acknowledged several positives about the Lunch-n-Learns (e.g. onsite, revisiting the "basics," etc.), they wanted opportunities to dive deeper into critical topics, particularly topics that were of current relevance to the children in their classrooms and the communities in which they worked. Furthermore, within their sensemaking, they conceptualized that having more opportunities to dialogue and collaborate with their peers would be more meaningful than being spoon-fed or read a "PowerPoint." To make these changes would require the Red School leaders to acknowledge and take into consideration the varying levels of teachers' knowledge and experiences in addition to the needs of the current children and families being served. Additionally, their sensemaking seemed to illuminate a desire among teachers and administrators to re-structure these meetings to offer more opportunities for dialogue and conversation.

Cross-Case Analysis of Experiences of IBPL

In order to further understand how IBPL was "perform(ed) in different environments," I present a cross-case analysis of the three schools' varying IBPL enactments (Stake, 2006, p. 23). I do so by utilizing the information learned through the three school case analyses (Yin, 2014; Stake, 2006); the Blue School's collaborative inquiry during their weekly age group staff meetings; the Yellow School's daily collaboration time and article reflections; and the Red School's Lunch-n-Learns. Through these varying IBPL engagements, while none fully enacted IBPL as defined in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.1), there is still an "opportunity to shed empirical light about some theoretical concepts or principles" (Yin, 2014, p. 40)—particularly in relation to how IBPL can be enacted in "various local conditions" (Stake, 2006, p. 40). Throughout this section, I use the term IBPL to speak generally about the varying IBPL opportunities each school engaged in (e.g. article reflections, Lunch-n-Learns, etc.). It is important to note that I did not use the term IBPL with the teachers directly nor did they use this in any of their articulations. When working to understand their sensemaking of these varying IBPL experiences, I asked specifically about their particular experiences (i.e. Lunch-n-Learns, collaborative inquiry, etc.). Still, I use this term here to demonstrate how their statements reflect components of IBPL.

Across the varying IBPL opportunities offered/required of these three programs, there were some commonalities in how the teachers and directors explained their experiences, both positive and negative. Analyzing the teachers' and directors' sensemaking about their IBPL experiences across the three cases (i.e. schools) elucidated

three themes that were common across and within all cases: IBPL requires a sense of community; IBPL requires education and experience; and needing more from their IBPL experiences.

Theme 1: IBPL Requires a Sense of Community

First, as the teachers and directors of the three schools made sense of their IBPL experiences, they noted that relationships helped to foster, create and/or were desired to produce an environment that was supportive of IBPL practices. From peer to peer relationships to teacher/director relationships, both helped to foster a sense of community that enabled teachers to feel 'safe' to open up and share with their peers and leaders, get advice or suggestions, and/or to question their practices by listening to others. As others have posited (e.g., Kitchen, et al., 2008; Gallagher, et al., 2011), such an environment is needed for teachers to feel comfortable to take risks and/or advocate for their own PL needs.

For example, during their group interview, Lisa and Leslie - both teachers at the Yellow School - reflected on their IBPL practices-collaboration time and called attention to how the time afforded to them fostered a space that "feels more supportive like a family" (Lisa, Interview). By not only "promot[ing] a lot of team building kind of camaraderie," IBPL created space for teachers to get suggestions and ideas from others, which Lisa and Leslie seemed to see as "really important" (Leslie, Interview). This example articulates how within the sense making of IBPL, the teachers and center leaders of the three schools posited the important role having time for collaboration was within

their IBPL practices. Having time for collaboration provided teachers access to other's perspectives, insights and in turn offered support into the actual challenges they faced in their classrooms. Such seemed to be possible due to the relationships and "family"-like atmospheres that had been built within their schools.

In cases where teachers felt less secure in their relationships, or, as Holly a teacher from the Blue School noted, when there were not only "clusters" of teachers but a "hierarchy" within those clusters, it was often "hard to have an even working environment." Therefore, having time to build and foster relationships where all teachers, regardless of experience or education, could feel comfortable in sharing openly and honestly seemed to be important as these teachers and center leaders made sense of their IBPL experiences as well. Time away from the classroom therefore, to engage in IBPL with their co-workers could, as Ulises, a teacher at the Red School termed, build this sense of "community" and could offer a "feeling of cohesion."

Yet, building such a community also seemed to require a certain level of "group dynamics," as Taylor, a teacher from the Blue School, noted during her interview. Taylor went on to express that not only time but also more opportunities in her words to, "build the team" were needed. Holly, also a preschool teacher from the Blue School, conveyed in her interview a need to "even the playing field"--meaning for inquiry to work, teachers needed a sense of community to feel comfortable in being open and able to pose questions and queries without reservation. Jennifer, the director of the Yellow School furthered this idea by reflecting on how "The professional landscape and the school

story…how the teachers' stories resonate with each other" were important in fostering and supporting IBPL.

Thus, both the teachers and directors articulated needing time to foster their relationships both on a personal and professional level. Doing so could, in turn, help to build a sense of 'community' and foster an environment that would be supportive of IBPL practices committed to what Nora from the Blue School conceived of as "growing and changing over time."

Theme 2: IBPL Requires Education and Experience

In addition to fostering and building a sense of community, the teachers across the three schools appeared to theorize that a certain level of education and experience in ECE were needed to be able to fully gain or find value from IBPL practices. Whereby, the more seasoned teachers were, the more they seemed to desire, as others have previously noted (e.g., Linder, et al., 2016), more inquiry-based and less banking types of PL (Freire, 2000). Specifically, the seasoned teachers were looking for learning experiences that were more than just lectures. This was not to say that the newer, less experienced teachers did not also want to engage in professional learning experiences that were inclusive of IBPL practices, but rather they were still looking for professional learning opportunities that could provide more direct and specific training in areas in which they felt they needed more support. As Veronica, a teacher at the Red School had noted in her interview, the teachers were "not new" and therefore did not " need the 101. We need something more." Veronica's comments highlighted how for her she really wanted more

from her schools IBPL-Lunch-n-Learns due to her education and prior experiences and thus highlighted a key component of IBPL, collaboration and dialogue as being important to her, a sentiment expressed similarly across all three schools (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Yet, as reflected in several of the comments from the teachers at the Blue School, being able to dive deep into IBPL practices seemed to require the education and experience that Veronica described as having above. For example, Zoe, a teacher at the Blue School, commented on this idea during our interview, "You have to understand child development," because when "the content knowledge isn't there" a majority of their collaborative inquiry meeting time was spent on "explaining why this is something we should do instead of diving deeper." For Zoe, when teachers were hired without having "a lot of education…those teachers need a lot of PD skills," and therefore need to "attend classes and be mentored" before she felt they could engage deeply in IBPL. Combined, Zoe and Veronica's comments highlight how within the teachers' sensemaking of IBPL, they saw it requiring a foundational level of education and experience in early childhood or child development for it to be impactful and in turn support and foster the teachers' actual PL needs.

Amelie, also a teacher from the Blue School, added during her interview that a teacher's abilities to learn or find value from IBPL experiences was dependent upon the "life maturities in the teachers and their experiences." Meaning, the more teachers engaged in inquiry practices, the more they were able to get out of them. As was previously noted above, Amelie expressed that because she felt she had "matured" she

now “get[s] more out of the collaborative inquiries.” She continued, “when you're newer and or less experienced … it can be hard to see that collaborative inquiry time as impacting your practice and … feels like a chore.” Here, Amelie, identified how within her sensemaking of engaging in the IBPL at the Blue School, she found them to be more meaningful having been at the Blue School for a few years. She noted that while she currently saw their collaborative inquiry impacting her practice, it had not always been that way. She noted further, “It takes a couple of cycles or even a couple of years to really figure out how to take advantage of that time.” Combined, these teachers’ comments jointly expressed how IBPL seemed to require a certain level of educational-foundation in ECEC and experiences - both practical on the job - as well as engagement with IBPL itself in order to dive into topics and see IBPL as valuable.

Theme 3: Needing More from their IBPL Experiences

Nevertheless, as the teachers and directors of these programs made sense of their varying IBPL experiences within their schools, particularly those from the Blue and Red Schools, they expressed wanting more from those experiences. Specifically, they wanted more time and opportunity to explore topics in depth. While the Yellow School teachers and center leader did not openly express this point, this may have been due to the high level of individual agency and freedom afforded to them to choose how to make use of their IBPL time-daily collaboration.

Time

Therefore, as the teachers and directors made sense of their engagement in their varying IBPL practices within their schools, there was an expressed need for time to be dedicated to these experiences. For example, Taylor, a teacher from the Blue School noted that each collaborative inquiry lasted for three weeks whether or not “it's a boring collaborative inquiry that nobody really cares about” or if it “is really good." In some cases, as Taylor noted, a short time frame was good, but when a topic presented that might be more engaging, she would have liked further opportunities to explore it by extending the number of weeks.

Similarly, the teachers also reflected on how the seemingly short the time frames of 40 minutes weekly -at the Blue School- and the 1-hour monthly - at the Red School- were and the impact these short time frames had on the level of depth that could be reached within their IBPL. For example, Justice, a teacher at the Red School commented in her interview that because their IBPL was “an hour’s worth of material” there was not opportunity for what she termed “quality” to be achieved. Zoe, a preschool teacher at the Blue School, further expressed a strong opposition to how the Blue School’s IT meetings were ran and in turn how the lack of “assertiveness” within the group to keep on track and focused further limited the time they could spend on their IBPL practices. Therefore, between the 40 minute weekly time frame and the 3 week suggested length of inquiry at the Blue School and the 1 hour monthly Lunch-n-Learn at the Red School, these created time limitations and impacted the depth that could be reached and/or the topics that could be authentically explored. Thus leaving the teachers to feel similar to Holly, who wished

they would "spend more time on the things that seem important like more in-depth time in the collaborative inquiry, more in-depth time on the children," or as Veronica from the Red School noted, more time and space for "dialogue" and "collaboration."

The Yellow School teachers and leaders did not express this same need, but rather commented on how the daily time afforded to them created the time and space to collaborate and dialogue with their peers or to seek and receive support as needed. Therefore, time in general seems to be needed to actualize meaningful IBPL, as was articulated across these three cases and has been previously theorized (e.g. Castle, 2016).

Depth

Furthermore, many teachers and center leaders across all three schools, but particularly within the Red School, acknowledged within their sense making of IBPL that the current state of their IBPL practices were not fully meeting the needs of the teachers, and in turn, the children they worked with on a daily basis. They expressed a lack of depth within these practices. Depth in this case was the opportunity to dive deep into a subject, or the ability to dialogue, critique, or talk about issues that were personally significant for the teachers, their current classrooms, children and/or families, or communities in which they worked, all of which are key components of IBPL as defined in Chapter 2 (see figure 2.1).

Within the Red School specifically, as the teachers and center leaders made sense of IBPL, they wanted their Lunch-and-Learns to move beyond direct instruction or as Veronica, a teacher from the Red School, described "rote" learning whereby "the

dialogue [wa]s missing, the conversations and the collaboration with your peers" and towards offering more opportunities to dive deeper that could meet these varying needs; particularly as a more experienced teacher. In addition, included within this depth, the teachers communicated wanting the topics covered within their IBPL experiences to be able to address and focus on issues directly challenging or impacting their teaching practices.

For example, Justice, a teacher at the Red School highlighted this when she expressed wanting time and space within their Lunch-n-Learns to explore more emergent and critical topics such as how to engage critically with children regarding their understanding of and experiences with their socio-political realities as was highlighted above in her example of her students talking about "guns on campus." Therefore, for such opportunities to be actualized, IBPL experiences needed to provide the space to dive deeper into issues impacting the specific children, families, and communities in which the teachers worked. Doing so could in turn better support the teachers in addressing and responding to critical topics as they arose within their teaching environments (e.g., MacNaughton & Hughes, 2007; Taylor, 2013).

Similarly, many of the Blue School teachers reflected that their IBPL-collaborative inquiries needed more space to "dive in a little bit deeper, and explore more aspects of where we can go on one subject" as Taylor noted in her interview. Diving deeper could support the teachers in moving beyond surface level discussions and allow them the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue, particularly when the topic had created a high level of interest. Or, as Amelie, a teacher at the Blue School, stated in her

interview, “I really do miss reading and researching and coming together to talk about our findings.” Amelie’s example highlighted an expressed need for more depth, particularly in relation to engaging in dialogue surrounding current research. She continued, “You know that happens on a small scale in these meetings but on like a larger and ongoing scale, it would be great…it’s hard to feel like there’s the time and the bandwidth to really make that happen.” Similar to what others have posited (e.g., Castle, 2016) providing support for such depth and critical dialogue would require more time to be allotted to their IBPL practices. As time is not usually available, particularly in full day programs such as the Blue and Red Schools.

Combined, the teachers within the Blue and Red Schools expressed a desire for their IBPL practices to create opportunities for teachers to not only discuss topics of interest at “academic intellectual levels” and move beyond the “101 trainings” but also to allow the time needed to do so. While the Yellow School teachers and center leaders did not denote a desire for ‘more’ depth within their IBPL specifically, they seemed to make sense of their IBPL as providing them with daily opportunities to dialogue and collaborate with their peers. This, in turn, provided them with a certain level of depth and authenticity as they were able to seek support, ask questions, and reflect on their teaching practices with their peers and center leader a like on a daily basis. Therefore, they too expressed how depth within IBPL practices was impactful for their teaching practices and within their ongoing IBPL.

CONCLUSION

In general, as the teachers and center leaders across the three schools made sense of their IBPL experiences, they noted similar to others (e.g., van Keulen, 2010) the important role relationships played in fostering an environment that was supportive of IBPL. Such relationships were needed for teachers to feel comfortable in opening up, dialoguing, and in turn engaging in IBPL. Nevertheless, relationships between teachers and center leaders were also highlighted as being needed for center leaders to be able to understand the lived realities of their teachers and, in turn, support and foster IBPL practices that could meet the teachers' specific PL needs. Therefore, collaboration was also highlighted as a positive outcome of IBPL, but relationships were also needed to enable the teachers to feel comfortable to engage in such practices in the first place. Engaging in IBPL practices onsite further supported and allowed for such collaboration and relationships to be built.

Additionally, there was a general feeling amongst the teachers and center leaders that for IBPL to be meaningful for the teachers, time was needed to fully explore topics of interest. Teachers wanted more from the IBPL experiences offered to them. They wanted to be able to dive deeper into topics, and furthermore, while new knowledge was something they were looking for, they desired to be given the opportunity to dialogue with their peers about such new knowledge. While the occasional 'refresher' was appreciated, being spoon fed information was not something they were interested in. The teachers wanted the opportunity to explore new topics, to question, and/or reflect upon their lived realities and particularly the children and families in their classrooms. The

Blue Schools IBPL-collaborative inquiries specifically provided space for teachers to explore topics beyond those they may have personally chosen, particularly 'critical' topics that pushed teachers beyond their comfort zones. By offering such new knowledge, possibly knowledge teachers did not even know they were missing, opportunities for critical reflection and change in their teaching practices were afforded.

Authenticity, or the ability for their IBPL experiences to be connected to their actual practices and the creation of safe spaces for teachers to share their experiences needs to be part of IBPL in order for different perspectives and experiences to be heard and valued (Westheimer, 2008). The teachers' and directors' sense making of the IBPL practices, such as the daily collaboration time at the Yellow School, highlighted how impactful and meaningful such time with peers could be for supporting teachers' learning within IBPL practices, particularly as they expressed gaining more from their daily collaboration time than attending the 'formal trainings' needed in order to stay in compliance with their state's licensing regulations. Yet, the teachers' sensemaking of IBPL emphasized the need for teachers to have a foundational level of education and experience. Without having a certain level of education and experience, the teachers conveyed that IBPL was not as valuable or impactful and instead suggested/requested more traditional PL opportunities.

Through this the cross-case analysis, insight can be gained into how professional learning in ECEC spaces can be reconceptualized towards becoming more IBPL. In Chapter 6, I will discuss specifically what this would mean for and require from ECEC

directors, teachers, teacher education programs, and policy within ECEC to achieve such IBPL.

DISCUSSION

Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications

INTRODUCTION

As calls continue to be made by various stakeholders to increase access to quality ECEC programs for all children, professional development (PD) continues to be positioned as a possible answer (e.g., NAEYC, 2016; Office of the Press Secretary, 2013; ReadyNation, 2014), particularly within the current accountability and standards movement (Buysse, Winton, & Rous, 2009; Diamond, Justice, Siegler, & Snyder, 2013). By placing emphasis on 'readying' children for their educational and entrepreneurial futures, these PD opportunities typically follow a technocratic approach whereby knowledge is provided from 'experts' to teachers. Teachers are then asked to replicate what they have learned in their teaching practice. Yet many scholars have and continue to call for PD that moves beyond meeting these neoliberal agendas and towards a broader focus on the child as a whole, rather than merely someone to be 'readied' for the future (e.g., Canella, 1997; Dahlberg, 2016; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Moss, 2016). By taking critical approaches to PD, ECEC programs can more authentically support the linguistic and cultural diversities within the communities they serve while also working towards addressing larger social inequities (e.g., Canella, 1997; Dahlberg, 2016; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Moss, 2016). Moving away from single-day workshop trainings towards more inquiry-based professional learning (IBPL) practices has been offered as a way to more authentically address and support ECEC teachers in their work with children (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). While research is building surrounding the

implementation of these practices and how it positions teachers as empowered knowers (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009), professionals (Sagor 2011), change agents (Hollingsworth 1994) and community activists (Fleischer 2000), little is known about how such practices are fostered and sustained (Hines & Conner-Zachocki, 2015; Sheridan, et al., 2009). In addition, understanding how teachers and center leaders make sense of IBPL practices is an additional gap within the literature. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative instrumental multiple case study (Stake, 2005) was to explore how the directors and teachers of three private ECEC programs in two states, Texas and California, made sense of their engagements in IBPL and PL in general. Specifically, the two research questions that guided this study were:

> 1) How do school leaders and teachers make sense of PL and their experiences within them and their school community?
>
> 2) How do school leaders and teachers make sense of IBPL and their experiences within them and their school community?

Data collection consisted of several PL observations of 59 teachers and center leaders within the three focal schools (Blue, Yellow, and Red), semi-structured interviews with 19 teachers and 4 directors across the three schools, and various artifacts (e.g. PL calendar, center policies on PD, etc.). Utilizing traditional qualitative data collection techniques, transcripts, observations, and artifact data were collected, transcribed, and analyzed (Merriam, 2009). Findings were presented in Chapter 4 regarding how, within each case, and then across the three cases, the teachers and center leaders made sense of PL in general. In Chapter 5, the findings regarding how these participants made sense of their varying engagements in IBPL specifically were analyzed.

In this Chapter, I first summarize the findings from Chapters 4 and 5 in relation to the two research questions guiding this study. Next, I include a discussion of these findings in relation to previous research and explore the implications of this study for the field of ECEC -- specifically, what it means for ECEC center leaders, teachers, teacher education programs, and policy makers. Following this, I point out the limitations of the study and provide suggestions for future research. I end this chapter with conclusions I have drawn from the findings of this study.

Summary of Findings as Related to Research Questions

In Chapter 2, I defined IBPL by highlighting ten key attributes that contribute to fostering IBPL: a focus on justice; providing space for critical reflection and questioning; incorporating lived realities of children, families, communities, and teachers; viewing changes as continuous; working to disrupt the status quo/challenge taken for granted 'truths'; connecting theory to practice and practice to theory; providing space for collaboration; including voices of children, families, communities and teachers; on-site; and positioning teachers as capable, competent and knowledgeable (see figure 6.1). Even though the three programs within this study were not fully engaging in many of these key aspects of IBPL (see figure 6.2), insights were still gained into the types of PL these teachers and center leaders conceptualized as being impactful and how several IB practices were articulated as being desired by both teachers and center leaders. Additionally, as participants were conceptualizing IBPL through a sense making perspective, all of their prior PL experiences, their contextual factors, as well as current

and future experiences were summoned to influence their current understanding of PL and IBPL (Allen & Penuel, 2015; Coburn, 2001; Dorner, 2012). Furthermore, because communication is "an ongoing process of making sense of the circumstances in which people collectively find [them]selves and of the events that affect them," it is through the combined dialogue of these teachers and center leaders surrounding PL and IBPL that insights into their understandings of IBPL specifically emerged (Taylor & Van Every, 2000, p. 58). To further highlight my interpretation of the teachers' and center leaders' sensemaking of PL and IBPL experiences whereby they seem to be advocating for IBPL practices, I will next briefly summarize the findings from Chapters 4 and 5.

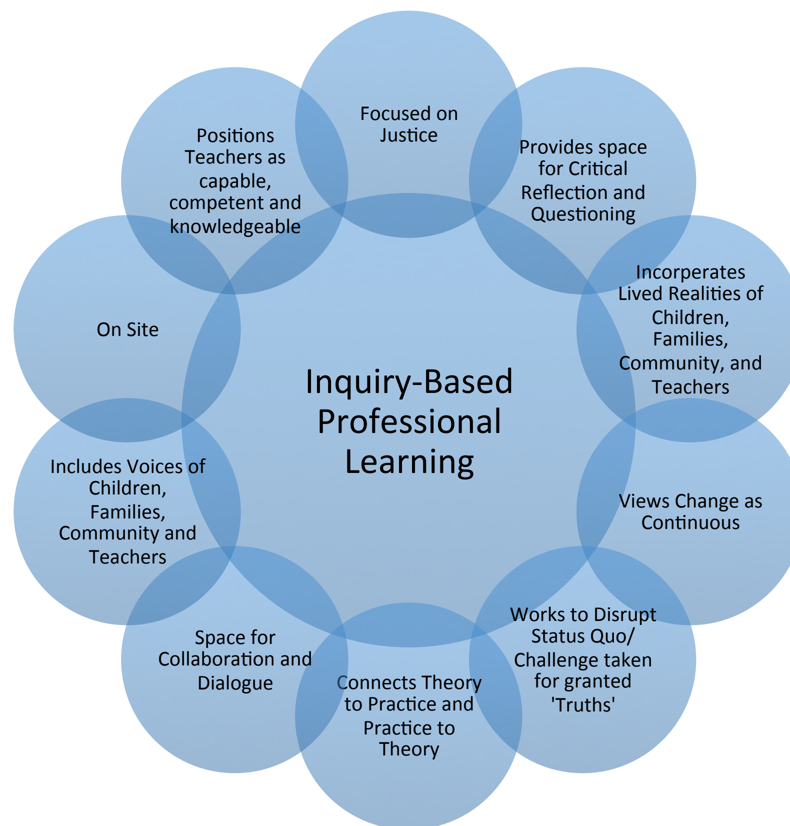


Figure 6.1. Key Attributes of Inquiry-Based Professional Learning

Key Characteristics of Inquiry-Based PL	Red School	Yellow School	Blue School
Positions teachers as capable, competent and knowledgeable	YES	YES	YES
PD driven by and respectful of the needs and voices of teachers, children, families, and the larger communities in which they work	NO	YES	YES
Opportunity to critically reflect, question, critique and share their various expertise, experiences, and teaching practices	YES	YES	YES
Time and space for dialogue and collaboration with fellow teachers, directors, and/or teacher educators	YES	YES	YES
Examine current research, connect theory to practice	NO	YES	NO
Address lived realities of current working environment	YES	YES	YES
Opportunity to disrupt status quo and rethink and challenge taken-for-granted 'truths'	NO	NO	YES
Address issues of injustice, larger systemic issues and work towards a more democratic society for all	NO	NO	YES
Ongoing change valued	YES	YES	YES

Figure 6.2 Enactments of Inquiry Key Characteristics Within Each Case

How Stakeholders Made Sense of PL

The findings from Chapter 4 highlight that the teachers and center leaders across the three cases were not interested in attending basic "101" PL trainings but were looking for more--more opportunity to dialogue and collaborate with their peers both during and after their PL engagements. Having more opportunity to engage with their peers made PL

experiences feel more impactful. Peer engagement also supported teachers in their ability to apply what they had learned to their teaching practices, while simultaneously creating and fostering a sense of community within their schools.

Second, in order for PL to be seen as valuable and what they termed “quality,” PL needed to be specific to, and reflective of, their teaching environments and the needs of the children, families and communities within them. There was an expressed difference between merely complying with and meeting state standards versus having access to and attending PL that met their specific needs and supported their daily teaching practices. While it was noted that both could happen, it seemed to require that teachers take the initiative to seek out such opportunities.

Finally, when making sense of PL in general, the teachers and center leaders across these three programs highlighted how viewing teachers as a source of knowledge could support and foster environments that were supportive of all teachers’ PL. Viewing teachers as capable of contributing to their own PL and having the ability to foster ‘ecosystems’ that could support ongoing change, required center leaders and teachers to view themselves as knowledgeable beings with knowledge to share. Combined, their statements began to illuminate how these types of PL align with IBPL practices, which was then examined and reflected on in Chapter 5.

How Stakeholders Made Sense of IBPL

The findings from Chapter 5 note that, in general, as the teachers and center leaders across the three schools made sense of their IBPL experiences specifically, they

voiced several key components of these experiences. First, the important role relationships played in promoting an environment that was supportive of IBPL. Relationships with both peers and center leaders were needed for teachers to feel comfortable in opening up, dialoguing, sharing their PL needs, and ultimately engaging in IBPL. Collaboration was therefore emphasized as a positive outcome of IBPL, but it seemed dependent upon the establishment of trusting relationships. Second, engaging in a variety of IBPL practices onsite seemed to support and allow for such collaboration and relationships to be built.

Third, there was a general feeling amongst the teachers and center leaders that for IBPL to be meaningful for the teachers, sufficient time was needed to fully explore topics of interest. Such time could afford them the opportunity to dive deeper into topics, to dialogue with their peers surrounding new knowledge, and to question and reflect upon how this new learning spoke to their lived realities - particularly as it pertained to the children and families - in their classrooms. They noted that having time to be with peers further supported opportunities for learning, particularly in comparison to attending 'formal trainings' or workshops that were required to stay in compliance with their state's licensing regulations. For example, the Blue School's IBPL-collaborative inquiries specifically provided teachers opportunities to explore topics beyond those they may have personally chosen. Their exploration of 'critical' topics pushed the Blue School teachers beyond their comfort zones and created space for critical reflection and fostered change in their teaching practices.

Fourth, as the teachers and directors made sense of their varying IBPL practices, they also emphasized the need for teachers to have a foundational level of education and/or experience in ECEC. Without a foundational level of either education or experience, the teachers conveyed IBPL was not as valuable or impactful and instead suggested/requested more traditional PL opportunities.

Discussion of Findings

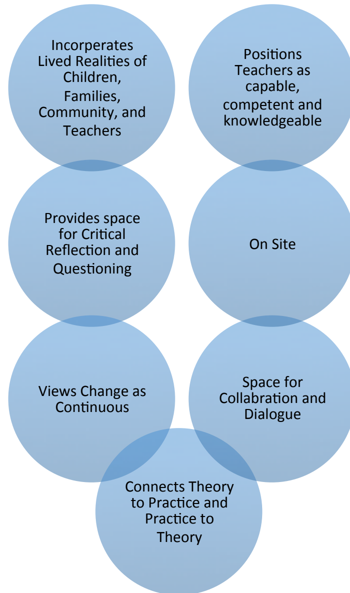
Based on my interpretations of the findings from this study, I have drawn four main conclusions, which I expand upon after naming them below. First, this study provides evidence that center leaders and teachers alike expressed conceptualizing IBPL practices within their sensemaking of PL in general. Meaning, as they made sense of both their various PL and IBPL experiences, they expressed the desire for these experiences to align more with key aspects of IBPL (e.g., moving beyond technocratic approaches and providing space for dialogue and collaboration). Second, the findings reveal that relationships, both with peers and with center leaders, play a large role in fostering an environment supportive of IBPL practices. Third, ECEC teachers and center leaders will ultimately be responsible for ensuring their own PL needs are met, regardless of whether or not it is mandated. Finally, the findings of this study point to the important role center leaders play in fostering IBPL practices. Having and requiring center leaders that have an ECEC background - in terms of both education and experience - seems needed to fully support and foster IBPL and authentically meet the varying PL needs of the teachers, and in turn, the individual needs of the children and families in their care.

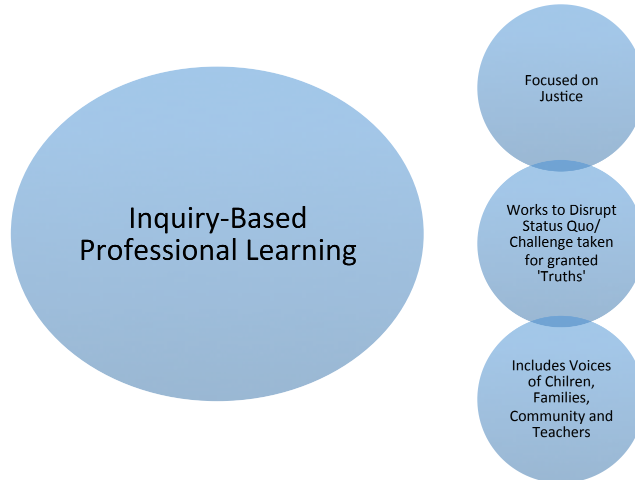
IB Practices Expressed within Sensemaking of PL

First, it is important to note that while none of these teachers or center leaders used the term IBPL explicitly as they made sense of PL or their varying engagements in IBPL, my interpretations of their sensemaking illuminated a desire across almost all participants for IBPL practices within their PL opportunities. This desire was expressed by specifically citing seven of the key aspects of IBPL as defined in Chapter 2: incorporating their lived realities; space for critical reflection/questioning; viewing change as continuous; a connection of theory to practice and practice to theory; being viewed as capable and competent; having space for collaboration/dialogue; and providing IBPL onsite (see figure 6.3).

Expressed Components Desired:

Components Not Explicitly Expressed:





Components to Add to IBPL:

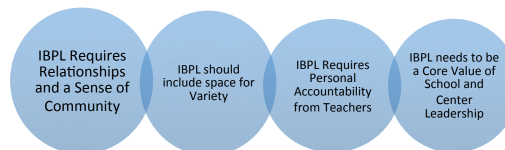


Figure 6.3. IBPL Components Desired within Teachers and Center Leaders' Sensemaking of PL and IBPL Experiences

The teachers and center leaders further articulated a need for what Sheridan and colleagues (2009) conceptualized as stage two of 'best practices' within PL, wherein PL shifts from being an "outside-in" process to becoming an "inside-out" process and teachers take ownership of their own "ongoing growth and improvement through continued study of current and best practices and reflective personal goal setting in collaboration with respected colleagues" (p. 380). Such an understanding of PL in this way aligns with IBPL practices and calls for a shift away from traditional 'banking' forms of PL in which knowledge is shared unilaterally and towards IBPL practices that foster and create agentic spaces for teachers and center leaders to engage in dialogue and critical reflection in relation to their own inquiries surrounding the children and families in their care, and as Taylor from the Blue School reflected, "div[e] in a little bit deeper" into those conversations.

Findings from this study further support previous empirical research that has noted that working towards fostering authentic IBPL can be challenging (e.g., Castle, 2016), particularly when working to shift the focus from the day-to-day challenges teachers face towards addressing, questioning, and challenging taken-for-granted truths/'best practices,' bringing in the voices of the children, families, and/or in questioning the role teachers "play in broader social and intellectual movements" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 9). Yet, as previous research has posited and the teachers of this study conveyed, IBPL practices afford the space for educators to engage in such critical work while contemplating new or differing perspectives, and/or reflecting and incorporating voices typically left out from these conversations (e.g. MacNaughton

& Hughes, 2007; Nuttal, 2013; Taylor, 2013). While these three schools were not yet fully engaging in such conversations, most of the teachers' and center leaders' sensemaking seemed to indicate their desire to dive into this critical work and to as Justice from the Red School commented, ensure they were "doing it right" and going beyond the surface level.

Combined, these findings suggest the need for teachers to be provided time, space, and support from their center leadership to engage in critical IBPL practices with their co-workers and to be able to move beyond engaging in technocratic trainings currently being offered and required of most ECEC teachers (Linder, et al., 2016).

Relationships Matter in Fostering IBPL Communities

Second, findings from this study helped to illuminate that fostering an environment that was supportive of "inside-out" IBPL seems to require strong, trusting relationships and a sense of community. These findings support a growing body of research that suggests relationships play a key role in fostering spaces supportive of IBPL (e.g., Hill et al., 2010). Because IBPL requires a certain level of trust and respect within teaching communities for teachers to feel comfortable and be willing to be vulnerable with their peers and center leaders, strong relationships among the teachers and directors must first be established (Cordingley, Bell, Thomason, & Firth, 2005; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Westheimer, 2008).

In terms of how to better support ECEC programs in fostering these supportive environments, teachers need to have time and space to collaborate and discuss with each

other outside of their classrooms. Dialogue and discussion in turn create opportunities to challenge thinking, reflect critically, and to come to understand different perspectives (Senge, 1990). For the teachers in this study, sufficient collaboration time seemed to be invaluable. Opportunities to seek out support, advice, and suggestions from their peers was made possible by - and was dependent upon - the level of trust they were able to build over time.

Fostering relationships therefore, “even[s] the playing field,” as Holly from the Blue School noted, and can support teachers in feeling comfortable to question not only practices but each other as well. Because ECEC teachers play a key role in either further inscribing or challenging the status quo, it is important that safe spaces are fostered that enable teachers to engage in critical conversations that may be uncomfortable or push them to reflect critically on taken for granted practices (Moss, 2014). Examples of topics to consider for these conversations include: Do their teaching practices support and celebrate diversity within their programs? Do teachers understand how certain ‘best practices’ within the field may be leaving out the voices/perspectives/histories of those typically marginalized within our society? Having the time and space provided within IBPL practices can help to foster communities of teachers that can help, support, and challenge each other to address these important issues (e.g., MacNaughton & Hughes, 2007; Nuttal, 2013; Taylor, 2013).

Compliance vs. 'Real' PL

Third, findings from this study also bring into question whether or not 'useless' PL is being mandated. In states such as TX where teachers are required to obtain a certain number of PD hours each year, does engaging in 'useless' PL actually influence teaching practices? Findings from this study support previous research that teachers may often just be "getting their hours" to stay in compliance rather than engaging in meaningful PL that could meet their needs, as teachers and center leaders like Jennifer from the Yellow School conveyed (Sheridan, et al., 2009). While not true for all teachers, many teachers and center leaders within this study articulated a disconnect between what was being mandated by their state's licensing regulations and what actually supports them in their teaching practices. This finding further supports previous research (e.g., Linder et al., 2016; Nicholson & Reifel 2011) that has articulated the lack of alignment between PL being required to stay in compliance with their state's licensing agency and their actual needs as teachers, and more specifically the children in their care.

In a profession where there is already a shortage of 'qualified' teachers and high turnover rates (Whitebook, et al., 2010), is requiring 'training' hours the most effective way to increase access to quality programs for all children? Are such requirements that feel "unneeded" to the teachers possibly leading to more turnover and further contributing to the issues of 'quality'? While the teachers within this study did note that teachers could both attend required trainings and get their PL needs meet, doing so required a certain level of intentionality from the teacher. Even still, most teachers and center leaders within this study expressed that they attend trainings out of convenience

rather than to meet their actual PL needs, often citing financial and time constraints as inhibitive factors.

Combined, the findings of this study further suggest that IBPL practices may offer an additional way to merge ongoing PL requirements and teachers' actual PL needs/desires. This, however, would require state policymakers to re-evaluate their mandates and explore and 'legitimize' various enactments of IBPL in addition to finding and supporting ways to make it affordable. Additionally, it would require center leaders to re-evaluate how and what types of PL opportunities they are asking, requiring and/or providing for their teachers. A foundational goal of PL should be for teachers to question, critique, and share their various expertise and experiences as they work towards addressing social injustices, creating a more democratic society for all, and ensuring their practices are respectful and inclusive of the diverse needs and voices of the students, families and communities they serve. By working to move PL towards IBPL practices, more space can be created to foster such learning environments for teachers and children alike.

Leadership Matters

Finally, findings from this study suggest that implementing IBPL practices requires center leaders to view IBPL as an ongoing "right of the teacher" as cited on the Blue School website by investing the time and money into IBPL opportunities for their teachers. While it may be possible to create an environment that supports the tenets of IBPL without the support of center leadership, as teachers have formed their own IBPL

groups (e.g., Kroll, & Meier, 2015; Meier & Sisk-Hilton, 2013; Sisk-Hilton & Meier, 2016), having the support of center leaders makes the process easier to conceptualize and then enact (Castle, 2016).

Furthermore, as others have previously researched and highlighted, center leaders play a significant role in the overall quality of ECEC programs (e.g., Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom, 2004). Therefore, as findings from this study support, center leaders who foster inquiry as their primary mode of PL can help create professional learning communities that in turn adopt such a perspective and engage in IBPL practices. Additionally, as findings from this study indicate, directors' various experiences and personal commitments to higher education seem to have an impact on their leadership styles and on their sensemaking as they work to foster environments that position IBPL as a core value.

IMPLICATIONS

Collectively, this study draws attention to how working to shift PL towards more IBPL practices could be valuable for ECEC professionals in their work with young children. Doing so can create the space for collaboration, dialogue, and critical reflection among teachers and center leaders that values teacher's knowledge while simultaneously creates the space to connect theory to practice and practice to theory (Hodgins & Kummen, 2018; Kummen & Hodgins, 2019). At the three centers within this study, teachers and centers leaders expressed an alignment with several key-attributes of IBPL as defined in Chapter 2 (see figure 6.1) and my analysis of their sensemaking of their

IBPL practices illuminated four components of IBPL that have been minimally discussed in the previous literature (see figure 6.3). The teachers and center leaders in this study framed these four components as: the role of relationships and a sense of community within the ECEC program, the importance of teachers taking personal accountability for their own PL, having a variety of PL opportunities, and the importance of center leaders valuing and supporting IBPL for their teachers. Additionally, these findings double as suggestions for ECEC spaces looking to shift their PL towards more IBPL practices. Thus, I next highlight what these findings mean for and require of: teachers, center leaders, teacher education programs, and ECEC policy makers to collectively support and foster more IBPL in ECEC spaces within the U.S. context.

Teachers

The findings from this study support previous research that has conveyed that, in general, the current PD opportunities afforded to or required of ECEC educators are not fully meeting their needs (e.g., Linders, et al., 2016). Most training opportunities continue to be single day or workshop type trainings that lack connection to the needs of the specific children and families with which teachers work (Sheridan, et al., 2009). Findings from this study help to identify ways a reconceptualization of PL may better support teachers in their work with young children. While the teachers across the three programs in this study did not directly name it IBPL, they articulated a desire for their PL opportunities to align with IBPL practices. Specifically, these teachers helped to clarify

five key aspects within PL that could better support teachers in their teaching practices, which I expand upon below.

Access to a Range of PL Opportunities

First, teachers need access to a range of PL opportunities. For IBPL to be meaningful, a variety of PL opportunities are needed and can provide a foundation of "knowledge" or experiences from which to reflect upon (Timperley et al., 2007). For example, outside knowledge, whether in the form of higher education, local or national trainings or academic journals, provide teachers with potentially alternative ideas and create opportunities for teachers to compare and contrast with their current practices (Whitebook, M., Gomby, D., Bellm, D., Sakai, L., & Kipnis, F., 2009). Furthermore, much can be learned from visiting and interacting with teachers from other programs. The diversity of ideas and experiences offer teachers space to critically reflect on their own practices and needs of the children and families in their classrooms.

IBPL is Dialogic

IBPL practices should also create opportunities to engage dialogically with peers both during and after engaging in such variety of PL so that they can collaborate with each other to foster and support their new learning. As findings from this study highlighted, such collaboration with actual peers seems to be highly valued, particularly in making learning both applicable and meaningful for the teachers' actual teaching practices. Nevertheless a sense of community and relationships need to be developed first by intentionally fostering relationships that can allow teachers to feel open to being

vulnerable and/or to share their PL needs with their peers and center leaders (Mantilla & Kroll, 2017). Therefore, teachers and center leaders need to create an environment that is supportive and open to ongoing learning and IBPL. Doing so enables all teachers to learn through IBPL shared experiences regardless of their prior education or experiences. Working to challenge and change teaching practices is a complicated process, even for experienced teachers (e.g. Brown & Ku, 2018). Yet, IBPL can provide the space for such dialogic exchanges with co-teachers and center leaders and may support and foster ongoing change and reflection in and on practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

IBPL Requires Complexity

In addition to opportunities for collaboration and dialogue, teachers want PL to go beyond a surface level, banking style of knowledge. Teachers therefore need opportunities to engage and be active participants within their IBPL opportunities (Zaslow, 2014). By taking an active role within their own learning teachers bring their lived realities, challenges, and inquiries of their classrooms, children, families, and communities into their IBPL conversations and in turn ensure their PL meets their specific needs as teachers (e.g., Riojas-Cortez, Alanis, & Flores, 2013). Moving beyond a single day or afternoon training and towards ongoing IBPL spaces can afford teachers the ability to dive deeper into topics they find personally interesting or to address the challenges currently faced in their teaching environments within a supportive community of peers and center leaders.

Teacher Agency

By advocating for teachers to have agency within their own PL, teachers themselves determine what topics of inquiry or areas of interest are most relevant to their teaching environments, and in turn, can diversify their levels of expertise within a program. Similar to Shulman's (2004) notion of wisdom of practice, teachers need opportunities to share their varying levels of knowledge and experience. Working collaboratively in groups and ensuring all voices are heard - particularly those typically marginalized – and privileging teachers as agentic beings whose inquiries into their own practices matter, creates new, generative, and contextualized knowledge (Adair, 2014). IBPL thus allows for the expansion of teachers' capabilities on a broad scale versus merely preparing them to teach academic readiness skills typical of single day or workshop based PL trainings.

Inquiry as a Stance Towards Learning

In addition, teachers need to conceptualize inquiry as a stance towards both their teaching practices as well as for their own PL (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Rinaldi, 2004). Such a stance towards education requires teachers to be willing to share knowledge, question, and learn with and from others. Conceptualizing learning in this way positions teachers as having valuable information and experiences that contribute to their own PL and creates opportunities for teachers to "negotiate subjectivities, seek social justice and embrace 'curiosity, the unknown, doubt, error, crisis, [and] theory'" (Pacini-Ketchabaw, et al., 2015, p. 66). By viewing teacher learning as an inquiry stance, it can create opportunity for teachers to focus on addressing larger issues within a

community or society (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Additionally, by viewing education as a process or as an ongoing conversation that is continually changing (Tobin, 2005), IBPL can provide space for teachers to engage in such conversations. Therefore by stepping back, center leaders and ‘experts’ provide teachers opportunity to bring their own perspectives, questions and queries forward. Doing so can further encourage and foster environments that can and do support ongoing change.

Center Leaders

For center leaders to be supportive of and be willing to shift PL towards more IBPL practices within their programs, they too need to first espouse a conceptualization of learning and education as a continuous process that requires ongoing critical reflection in addition to seeing teachers as capable and competent with knowledge to share. Foundationally, this mindset is needed for center leaders to work towards supporting IBPL, particularly due to the financial and time investment IBPL requires. Furthermore, as center leaders are often positioned as the “gatekeepers to quality” (Bloom, 1999, p. 207) within programs, they play an important role in creating time and space for such ongoing IBPL opportunities to take place (Goffin & Washington, 2007). Furthermore, previous research has added that a lack of support from center leaders/institutions can hinder the implementation of inquiry practices (Castle, 2016).

Fostering IBPL Requires Education and Experience

Specifically, it is important to acknowledge that center leaders’ prior practical classroom teaching and educational experiences will impact how directors make sense of

and choose to incorporate IBPL into their programs. Having prior teaching experiences allow center leaders to be knowledgeable of the daily lived realities of teachers and to be supportive of incorporating and listening to teachers' own perceived PL needs. In addition to having former teaching experiences, having higher education specifically related to ECEC, rather than merely a focus on business administration, seems to be advantageous for center leaders in being able to or desiring to create an environment that is supportive of IBPL as well (National Center Early Childhood Quality Assurance, 2014). Having both a foundation of ECEC education as well as actual teaching experiences enables center leaders to not only create an environment that is supportive of IBPL for teachers, but also one in which they too as center leaders continue to learn and grow and can add to the dialogue and support the learning community.

IBPL Requires Investment

Yet, providing IBPL will require center leaders to afford and dedicate large amounts of time and space for their teachers to engage in such practices (Castle, 2016). Time which can be hard to find, especially in ECEC settings that operate full day hours of 7am-6pm or longer - not to mention the financial commitment to be able to offer this time (Castle, 2016). This may require center leaders to get creative and look for ways within their center's budget to allocate funding to support IBPL. As was seen within the findings of this study, some center leaders may need to cover their teachers' classrooms to be able to afford them the opportunity to engage in IBPL.

Fostering 'Ecosystems' that can Support IBPL

Therefore, as others have previously suggested (e.g., Castle, 2016; Hahs-Vaughn and Yanoqitz, 2009) and findings from this study further support, center leaders play an important role in fostering 'ecosystems' that can be supportive of IBPL. For example, a leader's perspective towards PL will impact and influence teachers, whether that be through the teachers they hire, the types of PL they offer and/or require their teachers to attend, or how PL is positioned generally within their school culture, may impact teachers conceptualizations of PL as well. The culture within the center will also either support or hinder teachers' engagement in IBPL. Relationships then are noted again as playing an important role in supporting and enabling IBPL experiences to be cultivated. Therefore, center leaders need to foster and provide the space and time for these relationships and partnerships to flourish.

Partner with 'Experts'

Nevertheless, to foster IBPL within ECEC programs center leaders will also need to look for ways to bring 'new' knowledge into their programs. This can be through the use of current journal publications, various experts in the field such as university professors, outside trainers, opportunities to visit other schools/teachers, ECEC advocates, or those within the community who can provide deeper insights into topics currently relevant to the teachers, children and families. These outside resources help to offer teachers the support to engage in IBPL that creates space for critical reflection.

Additionally, center leaders themselves need to continuously stay abreast of the current research within the field. By suggesting that center leaders work with 'experts' or

outside knowledge sources, I am not implying that center leaders do not recognize the various knowledges and expertise within the teachers in their programs. Directors need to listen to and create space for teachers to share their inquiries and provide opportunities for teachers to explore topics together, yet various 'expert knowledge' can offer depth and complexity to these conversations.

Advocating for IBPL

Finally, working towards fostering more IBPL opportunities for ECEC teachers will require center leaders to be advocates for such practices. Given the large undertaking, restructuring, and reconceptualizing of engrained systemic structures in place, center leaders will play a key role in not only believing such changes are possible but also in working to foster and support them. In a field with such high turnover rates (Whitebrook, et al., 2010), making sustainable systematic changes can be challenging (e.g., Mantilla & Kroll, 2017). Yet, change is possible, as Tsoukas and Chia (2002) have said "change is all there is", and if center leaders intentionally choose to be advocates for their teachers to have access to IBPL, reconceptualizing PL towards more IBPL practices is possible (p. 576).

Teacher Education Programs

Teacher education programs typically do two things: train new teachers and train teachers who often become center leaders or are already center leaders. Teacher education programs therefore provide teachers with the 'foundational' knowledge, otherwise known as 'best practices,' for working in ECEC spaces. Yet most teacher

education programs are designed to prepare teachers to work in preschool-12th grade settings and rarely offer courses specifically designed to prepare ECEC teachers who will work with infants and toddlers (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2009; National Forum on Early Childhood Policy and Programs, 2008; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). To shift PL towards more IBPL practices would require teacher education training courses to reflect aspects of IBPL and require an expansion to include birth-3 into their course offerings. It would also require teacher educators to teach future and current ECEC teachers about IBPL practices and what it offers so that they can actualize it in the field and in their work with young children.

Inquiry as a Stance

First, reconceptualizing PL towards IBPL would require teacher education programs to foster inquiry as a stance within their ECEC teacher education courses--for the teachers themselves as well as for an approach to teaching practices. As Warford (2011) articulated, shifting one's view of "teacher education [from] a simple question of fact-cramming…[to] the promotion of a fundamental shift in the candidate's cultural identity" can work to support teachers in fostering inquiry as a stance towards teaching (p. 256). Introducing inquiry practices would require teacher education programs to advocate for conceptualizing teaching and learning as an ongoing process that necessitates continuous critical reflection. Course work should then focus on supporting teachers in being advocates for the needs of the children and their communities and for

themselves. As prior research has highlighted, teachers often find it challenging to stay critically aware and committed to implementing alternative approaches they may have learned about within their teacher education programs once they begin working full time and need supportive ongoing learning communities once they graduate (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Whitebrook & Ryan, 2011). Therefore, by helping to support teachers in seeing themselves as ongoing advocates who are called to address social injustices, center leaders can support teachers in working to challenge inequity. While teacher education programs have begun having critical conversations that work to challenge the status quo and work towards a more just and equitable society for all, further attention towards actualizing this goal is needed on a broader scale and "to support beginning teachers' recursion through the concepts learned in their coursework in a way that responds to the classroom-centered questions" (Warford, 2011, p. 256).

Developing Teachers as Leaders

In addition to fostering inquiry as a stance for pre-service teachers, teacher education programs will also need to position teachers as leaders and advocates able to educate for a more just and equitable society. By working towards partnering and building programs and course work designed specifically to "consider and support pre-service and in-service teachers as leaders" teacher education programs can help to ensure teachers become advocates for the children in their care and our larger global society (Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p.135). Additionally, when leadership is fostered from within rather than relaying on a top down implementation of 'best practices,' ECEC

programs can more authentically work towards implementing ‘quality’ programs that support the ‘whole child’ and the ‘whole community’ rather focusing solely on readying children for their academic futures (Douglas, 2017). Coursework within teacher education programs should include opportunities to explore such issues whereby ECEC teachers can be positioned as being agents of change. Nevertheless, supporting changes in teachers’ practices, both for in-service and pre-service teachers, that works to challenge the status quo can be a difficult task (e.g., Brown, 2018; Brown & Weber, 2016). Therefore, teacher education program coursework needs to provide space for pre-service teachers to engage in “investigative learning during their professional preparation” especially when the goal is to support teachers in becoming not only “a cultural mediator but also a teacher-researcher” (Lempert-Shepell, 1995, p. 438). Teacher education programs thus play an important role in supporting teachers to see themselves as leaders and teacher researchers who can and should have a voice within their teaching environments and should in turn offer opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage practically in such practices prior to entering into the field.

Offering Courses about IBPL

To accomplish these goals, teacher education programs must reflect on their course offerings to ensure they are fostering critical thinking skills and helping future teachers to appreciate the important role research plays within their teaching practices both as a producer and consumer of such knowledge. As Orlofski (2001) noted, rather than focusing on large scale changes, teacher educators need to reflect on their own

practices and work towards creating more transformational spaces that educate students in ways that enable them to connect theory to practice. Doing so can help teachers conceptualize research as a valuable and necessary teaching tool and foster a sense of ownership and leadership within and across all ECEC programs. For example, programs should further support and offer ECE courses that not only explore inquiry as a stance, but courses similar to those offered at the University of Texas at Austin should be offered. Courses should,

> Promote critical explorations of constructs of the child and childhood through a range of social, political, educational, and economic contexts…question or deconstruct assumptions that are foundational to the field…look globally and locally at the lives of young children…deepen student knowledge about early childhood educational theory and theory's connection to how agency, power and diversity are conceptualized in early childhood education… cover racial, class-based, linguistic, cultural and global perspectives on the relationship of parents and education… provide opportunities to explore possibilities for creative, ethical, decolonial, place-attuned and justice-oriented curricular and pedagogical possibilities in environmental education with young children. (UT website)

While these courses are typically offered within graduate ECE programs, more undergraduate programs focused specifically on ECEC should offer and require such critical coursework that moves beyond a limited focus on solely child development theories and perspectives or merely an elementary education focus which leave out

critical understanding of teaching infants and toddlers specifically (Whitebook & Ryan, 2011).

Ongoing Partnerships with Center Leaders

In addition to course offerings, teacher educators can support IBPL by building ongoing partnerships with center leaders and in turn help to support ECEC learning environments that support teachers learning beyond teachers initial and often minimal educational experiences (Whitebook, et al., 2009). Such partnerships should focus specifically on supporting center leaders in creating and fostering IBPL and in bringing 'new knowledge' and theory into practice. This may mean offering resources, such as journal publications or supporting collaborative inquiry groups specifically geared towards addressing the needs of center leaders and teachers.

Educational Leadership Programs

Furthermore, in addition to taking a critical stance towards evolving current courses across ECEC teacher education programs specifically, more educational leadership programs that focus specifically on ECEC leadership development will be needed to shift PL in ECE spaces towards IBPL practices. Center leaders play a large role in a program's ability to implement IBPL and consequently center leaders need to be educated in not only ECEC but also supported in developing their leadership skills as well (Castle, 2016; Hahs-Vaughn & Yanoqitz, 2009). While there are a handful of college and university-based associate and baccalaureate degree, post-baccalaureate, doctoral, and post-doctoral programs nationwide that offer courses that go beyond the

basic accounting and management for ECEC leaders typically required for state licensing agencies, these are few are far between (Goffin & Janke, 2013). Therefore, more programs that focus not only on ECEC leadership but specifically on learning how to foster communities that can be supportive of IBPL practices and supporting center leaders in fostering a sense of commitment to critical reflection and ongoing change for themselves as well as for their programs on the whole are needed. Programs that could place focus and specifically address the unique contextual factors that impact ECEC spaces that are systematically different than K-12 spaces.

ECEC Policy

Shifting the ways in which PL is conceptualized within ECEC spaces towards more IBPL practices will also require various changes within ECEC policy. First, it will require an expansion upon and the defining of the current focus of 'quality' across ECEC settings. Second, it will require a reconceptualization of how training is defined, required, and implemented. Third, re-evaluating licensure requirements within and across states will also be needed to support IBPL practices. Finally, re-evaluating funding resources to better support not only IBPL practices but in turn ECEC teachers and the children and families in which they work will also be needed.

Quality

First, globally there has been a focus on improving access for all children to attend 'quality' ECEC programs which has in turn placed attention on the PL of teachers (Tout et al., 2010). Much of the focus on 'quality' however has been placed within an

empiricist perspective of ‘school readiness’ that frames early education programs as providing young children with a very limited set of "knowledge, skills and experiences" rather than providing the broader and more complete ECEC experiences that many EC educators and researchers advocate for (Brown, 2017, p. 295). Therefore, PL within these conceptualizations is positioned as a way to ‘train’ teachers with a set of skills that will in turn enable them to be successful in readying any and all children for their futures. Yet, ECEC spaces, which are reflective of the US society on the whole, continue to be increasingly diverse (US Census Bureau, 2013). Dahlberg and colleagues (2013) therefore have argued for a shift away from the term ‘quality’ and towards conceptualizing a multilingual world where space is afforded to different perspectives stemming from different paradigmatic positions. Such a shift enables for " a story in which democracy and experimentation are fundamental values and the image of the child, educator and school is one of potentiality, of not knowing what a body can do" (Moss, 2016, p. 14). Particularly because as Dahlberg and colleagues (2007) further stated, quality "cannot be conceptualized to accommodate complexity, values, diversity, subjectivity, multiple perspectives, and other features of a world understood to be both uncertain and diverse" (p. 105). Therefore, shifting PL towards more IBPL practices will require a broadening of the definition of quality. By shifting away from the use of ‘quality’ to using terms as Moss (2016) suggested such as "‘projects’, ‘potentialities’, ‘possibilities’, ‘uncertainty’, ‘wonder’, ‘surprise’, ‘lines of flight’, ‘rhizomes’, ‘images’, ‘interpretations’, ‘democracy’, ‘experimentation’ and ‘meaning-making’," multiple entry points are offered into conceptualizing and fostering IBPL practices that can support

teachers in meeting the complex and diverse needs of all children, families, and communities in which they work (p. 14).

Training

In addition to broadening the notion of quality and in turn the focus of PL, fostering more IBPL opportunities within ECEC spaces will also require a shift from policymakers requiring and suggesting 'universal solutions'. Particularly as, Zaslow (2010) noted, there is currently a disconnect between the current strategies of PL and the ability to effectively prepare all teachers for the varied responsibilities, knowledge, and skills needed to work with such diverse children and families. Therefore, policies that call for more 'training' may not be what are actually needed for teachers and centers to make changes in their programs to better meet the needs of their children, families and communities. As the findings from this study and others have suggested (e.g., Linder, et al., 2016; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015; Riojas-Cortez, Alanis, & Flores, 2013) any 'universal' trainings need to allow space for individual centers to adjust and amend based on the communities in which they work. Time, space and opportunities to collaborate and dive deeper into their actual teaching practices, in conjunction with current ECEC theory and research as IBPL can provide, seem to be needed in more ECEC spaces (Whitebook & Ryan, 2011). Furthermore, as the teachers and center leaders of this study expressed, ongoing training is a good thing, but it really needs to be reflective of the lived realities and needs of the individual teachers.

Licensure

In working to shift PL towards more IBPL based practices will also require critical evaluation of current licensing regulations of ECEC programs in terms of teacher qualifications and PL requirements. When evaluating ECEC teaching requirements across the states, stark and vast differences exist in who is 'qualified' to work in ECEC programs (National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, 2014). While findings from this study further highlighted this, as TX and CA have varying licensing requirements (see table 4.1), the findings also conveyed that a certain level of 'foundational knowledge' in ECEC seems to be needed for IBPL practices to be impactful for teachers. Therefore, policymakers should consider requiring new teachers in the field to pursue a 'foundational' understanding of ECEC provided through enrollment in higher education courses designed by teacher educators to critically prepare teachers to engage in their work with children in ways that are reflective of current theory and research within the field (Whitebrook & Ryan, 2011).

The findings from this study also illuminate how licensing and/or accreditation requirements that require teachers and center leaders to obtain annual PL hours need further re-evaluation as well. As noted above, by requiring ongoing PL but not validating the IBPL teachers may be engaging in, teachers and programs may be discouraged from continuing to foster or be deterred from engaging in such practices in the first place.

Resources

In many cases, ECEC programs receive funding through grants and or various resources provided through state or federal agencies (Lipscomb, Schmitt & Pratt, 2015).

If the ultimate goal is to increase access to ‘quality’ programs for all children, then lager systemic reforms that can work to provide more funding in general towards ECEC are needed (Whitebrook & Ryan, 2011). Working towards leveling ECEC educators pay to be on par with those in public K-12 settings may be an obvious first step towards supporting ECEC teachers in pursuing higher education (Bowman, Donovan, and Burns, 2001), which others are continue to actively advocate for (NAEYC, 2018). As others have noted, increasing teacher qualifications (i.e. requiring BA degrees) without increasing pay limits teachers in actualizing these aspirations (Whitebrook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). Even when teachers do obtain higher education, they often leave the field and pursue jobs in the K-12 sector where the pay is higher (Whitebrook, et al., 2014). Therefore, by increasing public funding to support ECEC programs in general can support the increase of teachers pay to match the level of expertise needed to foster ‘quality’ learning environments that are inclusive of IBPL. Requiring higher education seems to be supported, yet, as previous research highlights, merely requiring more education without further systemic changes may not lead to actualization of more ECEC teachers in the field with such degrees (Whitebrook & Ryan, 2011).

Access to Higher Education

While state and federal funding are currently catalyzing the growth of leadership development in ECE, more focus and attention is still needed to grow these programs (Goffin & Janke, 2013). These policy initiative incentives such as Quality Improvement Rating Systems, Career Lattices or access to T.E.A.C.H.® scholarship funding designed

to encourage and support teachers attainment of higher education degrees are not available in all areas (Huss-Keeler, Peters, & Moss, 2013). Therefore, expanding funding and supporting teachers to further their education would enable more teachers and center leaders to actualize higher education attainment, especially as many teachers typically piece together PL opportunities rather than enroll in degree programs (Geringer, 200; Lanigan, 2011). By increasing access to higher education opportunities through scholarships or other funding sources, policymakers can offer further support that could lead to the building of ecosystems that can foster and encourage ongoing IBPL communities and critical reflection of teaching practices (Lipscomb, Schmitt & Pratt, 2015).

Conclusion

Combined, to shift PL towards more IBPL practices within more ECEC spaces, will require several stakeholders within ECEC: teachers, center leaders, teacher education programs, and policymakers to make various changes. First, teachers will need to not only see themselves as researchers but also work towards becoming advocates for their own PL, particularly IBPL that inspires collaboration and dialogue with their co-workers. Building relationships can support teachers in fostering a safe community that can allow them to explore critical topics in depth.

Center leaders will also need to work to foster these relationships, which in turn can support a culture conducive to IBPL. By espousing a commitment to IBPL, center leaders will also need to invest time and money to support IBPL practices. Additionally,

they will need to partner and pursue ECEC educational opportunities for themselves to stay current in ECEC theory and build partnerships with ‘experts’ outside of their program while not losing sight of the ‘experts’ working within their programs already (i.e. the teachers).

Changes in teacher education programs and the development of ECEC administration leadership courses and programs will be needed to foster IBPL as well. Coursework should provide opportunities to not only develop center leaders but also support teachers in viewing themselves as leaders as well. By focusing on developing critical thinkers who espouse inquiry as a stance towards their work with children and learning in general, teacher education programs can further support teachers as agents of change who can develop the skills needed to work to support and foster IBPL communities within their future programs.

Finally, changes are needed within ECEC policies. Policymakers should consider broadening the definition of ‘quality,’ whereby legitimizing a variety of IBPL practices. Changes in licensure regulations therefore could also further support IBPL. Furthermore, policy makers will need to allocate more public funding towards ECEC programs to bring teacher salaries on-par with those working in K-12. In addition to providing support beyond supporting the attainment of CDA’s grant funding will need to be further expanded to support teachers and center leaders alike in pursuing higher education which in turn can support and enhance IBPL practices.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

While this study provides many insights into the ways in which teachers and center leaders make sense of engaging in IBPL and provides steps various stakeholders can take to further support implementing changes, it is not without limitations. While intentional and beneficial to case study research, the first limitation of this study is that the three cases were purposefully selected for their engagement in IBPL (Merriam, 2009). While three different programs were observed, part-day for-profit-the Yellow School, full day for-profit-the Blue School, and full day non-profit-the Red School, these programs still leave out the voices of many teachers and center leaders whose different contextual factors could possibly impact their sensemaking of PL and IBPL in different ways. For example, a study with state or federally supported programs such as Head Start or home-based childcare programs may produce different results. Additionally, looking at schools not engaging in a play-based philosophy or following inquiry practices with children directly could also provide an alternative perspective from which to consider IBPL. This is important because as the three programs within this study, and prior research has highlighted, contextual factors play a role in how teachers will make sense of their experiences (e.g., Dorner, 2012). However, having multiple data sources allowed for triangulation across the three schools, the teachers, and center leaders combined.

Furthermore, while I intended to study programs fully engaging in IBPL practices, these three schools were engaging in some aspects but proved to be in process of working towards IBPL practices. Therefore, a complete understanding of how teachers and center leaders make sense of engaging in IBPL was not fully achieved. To account

for this, the teachers and center leaders sensemaking of PL in general was explored to gain insights into what, if any, IBPL components were present within those understandings. Yet, in doing this, there is a certain level of bias innate within the teachers' and center leaders' sensemaking towards IBPL in the fact that these programs, while not fully engaging in IBPL, were already working towards IBPL practices and therefore the teachers and center leaders may already foundationally conceptualize value in such practices.

Finally, no direct formal observations were made of the teachers' teaching practices. Data consisted solely of PL practices and interviews with teachers and center leaders, both of which mainly existed while no children were present. Observations of direct teaching practices could have provided additional data that could have been utilized to further understand the teachers' experiences and contextual influences on their sensemaking of PL. Yet, as Stake (1995) noted, interviews are at the heart of case studies. Therefore, by conducting semi-structured interviews with both teachers and center leaders across the three schools, all with varying levels of education and experiences, allowed access "to add new ideas on the topic" as they presented themselves (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). However, while "saturation" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) within the transcription data was achieved as repetitive statements were being expressed across the various participants, additional interviews conducted over a longer period of time may have provided further insights as teachers could have reflected further on their PL experiences. Consequently, due to the short duration of data collection, additional data may have been left out.

Future Research

While this study denotes the important role various IBPL opportunities can have on center leaders' and teachers' sensemaking of their PL, it also points to the need for more research that dives deeper into how IBPL can support and impact teachers' teaching practices. Furthermore, additional research focusing on supporting centers' reflections of their PL practices and work towards implementing more IBPL opportunities could further add to the knowledge base of how IBPL practices can be implemented across varying types of programs. Action research, in particular, may be able to add insight into supporting a program working towards shifting its PL practices towards more IBPL practices. By engaging in action research with practicing directors and teachers, insight into how such changes do or do not alter their sense making of PL and IBPL could be learned. Particularly, as was seen here, teachers' sensemaking is highly dependent upon the context in which she or he works.

More research is also needed that addresses the lack of opportunities within higher education programs for teachers and/or directors to foster and develop their leadership skills geared specifically towards ECEC. As teacher education programs start implementing more diverse courses to support ECEC leadership as well as broader inquiry stances towards both teaching and PL in general, research will be needed to learn from those experiences. Furthermore, more ECEC scholars are needed within educational leadership programs to further research and support the leadership of ECEC's future and current center leaders.

Additionally, as was the case within these programs, opportunities exist for further research about teachers and directors' own experiences and sense making of PL and IBPL specifically. As PL continues to be a global focus to increase access to quality ECEC programs, the voices of those directly responsible for implementing such practices need to continue to be included and incorporated in the decision making process so that members of the ECEC community do not lose sight of the actual children, families and communities they are working with and for and further research will be needed to continue to insure their voices are heard.

CONCLUSIONS

While the lack of research on how teachers and center leaders make sense of and engage in IBPL practices in ECEC is a significant gap in the early childhood literature, this study has sought to begin to address this gap and provide the field with insight from the teachers and center leaders working in a range of ECEC spaces engaging in a variety of IBPL practices. As various stakeholders weigh in on how best to improve access to high quality ECEC centers for all young children, it is important to include the voices of teachers and directors who work directly within the centers in the conversation. The issue of PL in general for ECEC teachers is complex and multi-faceted, and adding IBPL further confounds the issue. Therefore, this study provided a look into teacher and center leaders' sensemaking of engaging in both PL and IBPL practices and allowed them the opportunity to articulate their experiences and their understandings of those experiences.

From this work, insights were gained from teachers' and center leaders'

experiences of engaging in a variety of PL practices, adding to the general understandings of PL in ECEC and providing more information that can assist the field in conceptualizing a shift towards more IBPL practices. Understanding directors' and teachers' lived experiences engaging in IBPL specifically and PL generally illuminated how inquiry can vary in different spaces. Because there is not 'one' way to practice IBPL, replication of IBPL will require programs to self-evaluate and determine what components are most important to them. Teachers' past experiences and education will determine exactly how best to foster IBPL practices. Building relationships and a sense of community within ECEC programs will be needed for all teachers to feel safe in expressing their PL needs and to be open to critical reflection as well. Findings from this study also depict that in addition to having the support from center leaders themselves, time and money are needed to support IBPL practices.

Yet, ongoing research is needed to further understand how ECEC programs can better meet the needs of all the young children enrolled in these programs and ECEC teachers and center leaders have much to offer to those understandings. Combined, this work can be used as a starting point from which to continue to understand how PL opportunities can be altered and broadened to meet early childhood educators' needs and in turn the children in their care. By working to reconceptualize PL towards IBPL practices, space is created for more dialogue, more collaboration, and in turn, more authenticity to address, question and re-think taken for granted practices. ECEC spaces are prime locations to foster, support, and encourage deep reflection on educational practices that are currently further re-inscribing injustices. When teachers and center

leaders are provided opportunities to engage IBPL practices, space can be created for teachers and center leaders alike to conceptualize changes that are typically seen as too challenging to tackle.

Appendices

Appendix A: Inquiry E-mail

Dear ECE Professional,

My name is Joanna Englehardt and I am a PhD candidate at UT Austin and I am looking for sites to conduct my dissertation research. I am wondering if you might be a match?!

I am interested in finding programs that are engaging in ongoing center based professional development. I define the term professional development broadly, beyond what might be considered 'official' PD by the state requirements. Specifically, I am interested in learning from centers who are offering teachers opportunities to think critically about their work specifically, the larger ECE context, or time to spend on other aspects that may be influencing/impacting their work with children (eg. self care) on an ongoing and continuous basis, and preferably center based.

I want to learn what it is you are doing, how your are doing it, and what your teaching teams think of it.

If you think your center is doing something interesting and you are willing to share with me and others, please contact me by email: jenglehardt@utexas.edu or phone XXX-XXX-XXX.

Thanks in advance for your time and I look forward to learning from you!

Kind Regards,
Joanna Englehardt

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Teacher Interview Protocol

In this interview, I am interested in learning about your thoughts and experiences in regards to professional development, specifically inquiry-based ongoing professional development. I am going to ask you some general questions about your past experiences and education as they relate to your role as a teacher. Additionally I will ask some demographic questions, such as your age to begin before asking you questions directly related to professional development. This interview is voluntary. You can refuse to answer any question, and you can stop the interview at any time. You can decide you don't want to participate without any negative consequences, at any time. Everything you say is confidential and you will be given a pseudonym name to insure confidentiality. Feel free to ask me any questions, at any time. I would like to record our conversation. The record will be kept with a pseudonym rather than your name so no one knows who you are. May I begin taping?

Sample Interview Questions: Individual Teacher Interview

Background information.

How do you identify yourself culturally? Age?

How long have you worked at your current school? How long have you worked in early childhood in general? You serve 5months-PreK, what age groups have you worked with in the past?

What is your current position? Have you ever held any other positions within early childcare prior to your current role?

What is your educational background? Formal educational experiences before or during work in early childhood?

Professional development.

Generally…

How do you define Professional Development?

Do you see any connection between Professional Development and Staff Retention?

Specifically to Blue School:

What is the purpose of partner meetings? Staff Meetings? All Staff Meetings? And Pedagogy meetings? Additionally each teacher gets planning time each week as well?

Can you tell me more about the collaborative inquiry in age group staff meetings? Can you describe your experience engaging in it? Where do the topics come from? What do you think you gain by participating? What about children? And Families?

Can you tell me about a time that from one of your meetings you really stopped and reflected/ re-thought and questioned your current practices? What was that like?

Are there any barriers you face in engaging in such PD? What challenges do you face?

How does engaging in inquiry-based PD position you as a teacher within the center?

How do you think you as a teacher are impacted by your weekly meetings?

How do you think the kids in your class are impacted by your weekly meetings?

Do you feel your current PD meets the needs of your children, families and communities in which you work? What could enhance it?

Do you feel your current PD meets your needs as an educator? What might you add?

Do you think your engagement in PD impacts your classroom practices? In what ways?

Meetings are scheduled and time watched, what impact do you think that has on your meetings?

Do you feel you have agency in your PD? Can you contribute your ideas? Your needs?

Check ins? You do this at each meeting, can you tell me about that?

Have you had other PD experiences in the past? How would you compare those with the PD you current experience?

Is there some other way you would rather use the time dedicated to meetings?

Evaluations of leadership: Do you think these will be impactful?

Innovative Teacher Project? Round table about communication, can you tell me more about that?

Are there state regulations/requirements/ or any other accreditation requirements for you to participate in PD? Does the inquiry-based PD meet these requirements?

If you could create your own PD, what would it look like?

Is there anything you'd like to share that you think is important that I didn't ask about?

Leader Interview Protocol

In this interview, I would like to talk to you about your thoughts about PD in general and specifically about your centers engagement in ongoing PD. As you know, I am interested in learning more about how PD is enacted in early childhood settings. I will be asking you questions that focus on your thoughts and experiences in regards to your experiences engaging in PD as well as your role as a leader in supporting teachers' continual learning. In addition, I will ask some questions about company, state, federal and/or accreditation requirements that impact your requirements of teachers for PD.
This is a voluntary interview. You can refuse to answer any question, or stop the interview at any time. You can decide not to participation with no negative consequences. Everything you say is confidential and no one other than me will be able to connect your words to you. If you have any questions you can ask me anytime – now or during the interview.
I would like to record our conversation. The record will be kept with a pseudonym rather than your name so no one knows who you are. May I begin taping?

Sample Interview Questions: Leaders

Background information:
How do you identify yourself culturally? Age?

What is your current position? Have you ever held any other positions within early childcare prior to your current role?

How long have you worked APS? How long have you worked in early childhood in general? You serve 5months-PreK, what age groups have you worked with in the past?

What is your educational background? Formal educational experiences before or during work in early childhood?

What educational requirements do you have for your teachers pre-employment? How about directors? How about experience, do you have any requirements in regards to prior experience?

Professional Development:

How do you define Professional Development?

Do you see any connection between Professional Development and Staff Retention?

What role do you see yourself playing in supporting teachers and/or directors/administrators professional development?

What does your involvement look like?

How do you feel like you yourself engage in professional development?

Can you tell me about how ongoing PD got started at the centers center? And what you might define as professional development opportunities offered to staff?

Do you think these PD practices create opportunities to re-think/question practices?

How would you define professional development within your center?

In what ways do you see PD impacting your program? Your classrooms? Your children? Your teachers? Your Families? Your community?

What challenges do you face in implementing PD opportunities for your staff?

Do you feel your current PD meets the needs of your children, families and communities in which you work? If no, why not? What's missing?

Do you feel your current PD meets your teachers needs as educators? If not, what's missing?

Do you require your teachers to attend additional PD? Internet trainings? Outside workshops/Conferences? Do you require and/or pay for teachers to enroll?

What does that look like/require of them?

If offsite, does the company pay for the trainings and/or their time?

How about higher education? Internet trainings? Outside workshops/Conferences? Do you require and/or pay for teachers to enroll?

How often do teachers participate in professional development? Either required or attending on their own regards?

Do you have any company requirements or regulations you have to meet in regards to

PD?

What about state regulations/requirements?

What PD do you wish was available for your teachers? Why?

Do you feel you have control in how you develop opportunities for your teachers PD?

If not, why not? Who or what influences your decisions?

What are your ideas about PD? How important do you think PD is for teachers? If you could create your own PD, what would it look like?

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