

2016

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Patricia A. Thompson

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Perspectives of Teacher Quality:
Perceptions from Secondary Educators in Private and Public Schools

by

Patricia A. Thompson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
in
Learning and Leading

University of Portland
School of Education

2017

**Perspectives of Teacher Quality: Perceptions from Secondary Educators
in Private and Public Schools**

by

Patricia A. Thompson

This dissertation is completed as a partial requirement for the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree at the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon.

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of teachers regarding teacher quality. Specifically, this research study examined how the twelve high school teachers' perceptions of teacher quality related to four research categories defining teacher quality: teacher qualifications, personal attributes, pedagogical practices, and teacher effectiveness. Specifically, this study sought to examine: 1) how perceptions of teacher quality in the private schools compared to those in the public schools; 2) how socio-economic demographics in schools affected the teachers' perceptions of teacher quality; 3) how high school administrators evaluated teacher quality in the selected schools; and 4) how the teachers' perceptions of teacher quality linked to the schools' evaluation system systems.

Results of this study suggest that different types of teachers in various settings discussed teacher quality in similar ways. Teachers agreed that strong teacher-student relationships, content mastery and relevance were keys to quality teaching. In addition, the socio-economic status of students influenced how teachers viewed teacher quality. Surprisingly, many teachers did not discuss the inter-relationships between content standards, pedagogical practices, and teacher effectiveness, and teachers' perceptions of teacher quality measurements did not match measurements within their respective schools.

Key words: Teacher quality; highly qualified teacher; teacher qualifications; personal attributes; pedagogical practices; teacher effectiveness; teacher quality measurements; culturally responsive teaching

Acknowledgements

To Dr. Richard Christen, who has served as the chair of my dissertation committee—my sincere thanks for your gifts of time, patience, thoughtfulness and acumen in guiding me along this research journey. And to Dr. James Carroll and Dr. Eric Anctil, who have served as members of my dissertation committee—my sincere thanks to each of you for your ongoing support and keen eye.

To the University of Portland School of Education Professors in the Doctoral Program of Leading and Learning, Organizational Leadership—along with Dr. John Watzke, Dean, and Dr. Bruce Weitzel, Associate Dean—my gratitude to each of you for your guidance and support along the way.

To Cohort 1 members of the University of Portland’s Doctoral Program in Leading and Learning—I have been inspired by each of you.

To the teachers and principals of Schools A, B, C & D—thank you for your gifts of time, dedication, and your unwavering commitment to the students, teachers, and the communities you serve.

And to my dear family, friends and colleagues—your ongoing support throughout this journey has been extraordinary and I am forever grateful.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this introductory chapter, I will explain why the exploration of teacher quality through the lens of teachers is critically important to the national conversation on teacher quality. I will share what the research does and does not tell us about the evolution of this way of thinking and what teacher quality means as defined by a theoretical framework from Michael Strong's work on the highly-qualified teacher (2011), including the evolution of the meaning of teacher quality. Finally, I will explain the purpose of this study and why teacher perception of teacher quality is so critically important in 2015.

Problem Statement

Throughout the past forty years, there has been significant educational research citing the importance of teacher quality and teacher effectiveness in our nation's schools. In The Highly Qualified Teacher: What is Teacher Quality and How Do We Measure It? (2011), Strong suggested that teacher quality is the single most important variable related to student achievement. Watson, Miller, Davis and Carter (2010) pointed to a direct relationship between teacher ability/skill and student academic achievement. Additionally, the work of Hattie (1996), Darling-Hammond (2002), Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), Danielson (2007), and Marzano (2003) identified high-quality instruction as the single most significant factor in education in today's world that will ensure student achievement and overall school success.

Despite recognition of the importance of teacher quality, a consistent definition of teacher quality does not exist in the literature. Strong (2011) described

four conceptions of teacher quality discussed in the educational literature including: (1) personal attributes (e.g., race, gender, and dispositions such as honesty, compassion, fairness, self-discipline); (2) teacher qualifications (e.g., degree, college quality, test scores, certification and credentials); (3) pedagogical skills and practices (e.g., instructional strategies, classroom management skills); and (4) teacher effectiveness (e.g., academic performance of a teacher's students). Each of these characterizations has a history in the schools along with an extensive research base.

There has been a significant amount of research supporting the importance of personal attributes in determining teacher quality. Stronge's Teacher Skills Assessment Checklist (2007), the earlier work of Witty's twelve desired teacher qualities (1950), and Cruickshank's variables of teacher effectiveness (1986) all identified various personal attributes that have been recognized as measures of teacher quality. Watson, Miller, Davis and Carter (2010) pointed to a relationship between teacher affect and teacher effectiveness, noting that teacher affect influences teacher effectiveness. Other researchers cited that a teacher's personality characteristics have a much greater role in student achievement than other teachers' content knowledge or pedagogical skills (Bettencourt, Gillett, Gall & Hull, 1983; Noddings, 2002). The concepts of caring, dedication, interactions, enthusiasm, (along with content knowledge) accounted for more than 50% of the teachers who responded to the Watson, Miller, Davis and Carter study (2010). Payne's pedagogy of poverty (2005), critical race theory as defined by Singleton and Linton (2006), and Sizer's creation of the Coalition of Essential Schools (1984), also made the case

that a teacher's affect and personality are keys in creating a positive learning environment for students.

The concept of teacher quality as a set of externally sanctioned qualifications and credentials originated in the licensure requirements of the nineteenth-century common school era and were revived in *A Nation at Risk* (1983) and the definition of highly qualified teachers in the original No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB, 2001). Emphasis on teacher quality as pedagogical skills and practices appeared in the work of Marzano (2003) and Danielson (2007), who gained prominence in the 1980s and 1990s and later in NCLB's concept of best practices. Finally, beginning in 2000, the U.S. Department of Education promoted teacher effectiveness as demonstrated by student achievement as the new measure of teacher quality. The U.S. Department of Education provided incentive funds for district and state teacher unions to voluntarily change their teacher evaluation systems including student growth goals while NCLB allowed states to apply for waivers with states applying for waivers from unpopular mandates by incorporating student performance data into teacher evaluation systems.

Until the removal of NCLB in 2015, over forty states were granted waivers from the original NCLB mandates, with the requirement that states directly tie teacher accountability measures with student growth goals in exchange for greater flexibility, waiving the original federal requirements of 100% of all students demonstrating proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014 (Education Week, 2015). In many school districts across the country teacher evaluation systems have linked the meta-analysis of research from Danielson (2007), Marzano (2003), and

Marshall (2006) and have included required student growth goals for every teacher in every content area annually.

Although we know much about the different perspectives used to defined teacher quality over the last several generations, there has been little research about teacher perceptions of teacher quality. Fueled by NCLB, Race to the Top funds, and other federal policies, the definition of teacher quality shifted to an externally imposed conception of qualifications, pedagogical skills, and especially teacher effectiveness during past forty years. Many teachers, especially those in lower socio-economic schools were asked during this time to significantly change their beliefs about teacher quality. A new system of accountability measured primarily based upon qualifications, pedagogical skills, and teacher effectiveness replaced the emphasis on teacher qualities, a change that was uncomfortable for many. Yet as Watson, Miller, Davis and Carter (2010) have indicated, there is nothing in the current research indicating how today's teachers, caught in significant changes in the definition and methods of evaluating teacher quality, view teacher quality. They suggest there is a disconnect between how teachers, administrators, and policy makers view teacher quality in the twenty-first century and between teachers' sense of quality and the current, externally imposed measures of teacher quality.

Purpose of the Study

Analysis of the implementation of The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and other policies have provided important insights and valuable lessons about the shift in definitions of teacher quality from the internalization of personal attributes to external measures of teacher effectiveness. At the national level, the initial federal

legislation did not result in the significant achievement gains that were envisioned during the 2000s despite many school improvement efforts. As a result, a focus has emerged moving away from student accountability and school improvement gains to teacher accountability for student growth as evidenced by student test scores. It is this shift from internal to external measures of teacher quality that point to the importance of teacher perceptions throughout this change. The purpose of this study was to examine the voices of teachers whose perceptions will perhaps lead us to new insights into this important research relating to teacher quality.

The study examined the perceptions of teacher quality among current teachers. It investigated whether teachers acknowledged the external measures of accountability and the extent to which they held on to personal attributes as measures of quality. My own professional experience as a teacher and an administrator working with teachers generated a keen interest to further explore what teachers think about teacher quality during this time of dramatic change in the ways teacher quality is defined and evaluated. The new knowledge about teacher perceptions of teacher quality obtained from this study will provide educators with important information on the degree to which teachers have assimilated elements of teacher quality based upon the shift from personal attributes as a primary lens to external measures of teacher quality based upon imposed local, state and federal legislation, and it will help administrators to support teachers in this shift. It will provide a critical link between individual teacher's own analysis and perceptions of teacher quality and new reforms that have redefined the definition of teacher quality in the past twenty years.

The study also produced knowledge useful to policymakers and administrators. Recent research from Strong, Gargani and Hacifazlioulu (2011) suggested despite the highest qualifications that evaluators of teacher effectiveness may possess, they are not necessarily able to identify successful teachers. Thus, the rationale for examining teacher perceptions of teacher quality and effectiveness becomes critically important. Teacher perceptions of teacher quality inform educators of the decision-making process related to pedagogical skills and practices based upon student needs. Teacher perceptions of teacher quality demonstrate how best to create a culture of learning in every classroom through their personal attributes and personalization strategies.

Research Questions

This study will investigate the following question: What perceptions of teacher quality currently exist in selected public and private schools?

More specifically,

1. How do high school teachers perceive teacher quality?
2. How do the perceptions of teacher quality in selected private schools compare to those in the selected public schools?
3. How do perceptions of teacher quality compare to schools with different socio-economic demographics?
4. How do high school administrators measure teacher quality in the selected schools and what measurements do they use? How are the measures implemented? How is feedback to teacher communicated?

5. Do teacher perceptions of teacher quality link to existing internal and external measures of teacher quality?

Summary

In the remaining chapters, this research study will address the next steps of this dissertation study: Chapter two will describe 1) current research on elements of teacher quality and effectiveness including personal attributes, teacher qualifications, pedagogical skills and knowledge and teacher effectiveness, and 2) existing measures of teacher quality and effectiveness that shape the essential questions raised in Chapter one. Chapter three will provide specific details on the methodology that was implemented in this basic qualitative study. Chapter four will provide an in-depth analysis of qualitative data that reflected perceptions from selected teacher participants along with an analysis of what and how measures of teacher quality were implemented in the selected private and public schools. Chapter five will conclude the dissertation with a discussion of the findings from this study and implications and recommendations revealed in this research study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the educational research on teacher quality. The chapter will discuss studies on the importance of teacher quality and studies of teacher quality emphasizing four major perspectives on highly qualified teaching (Strong, 2011). The chapter will also connect the various teacher quality perspectives to changing stated and federal legislation and policy, especially updates to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 over the past several decades. Finally, the chapter will discuss the research on teacher perceptions of teacher quality, pointing to the need for the qualitative study conducted as a part of this dissertation.

Importance of Teacher Quality

Strong (2011) summarized research showing the importance of teacher quality in determining student achievement. According to Strong, research has shown that teacher effectiveness within schools varies widely, and students assigned to teachers with a history of being more effective are more likely to show greater achievement gains than those taught by less effective teachers. Ultimately, Strong conceded that while we know that teachers make a difference and students benefit most from effective teachers, there is need for additional study on what effective teachers do and how to measure their effectiveness. Strong proposed the design of effective value-added measures of student achievement coupled with the use of specific classroom observation tools to more efficiently measure teacher effectiveness. Yet even the best teachers cannot perform most successfully when school and societal factors compete, Strong admitted, and he called for a move from

data to action and toward a radical restructuring of our educational system. An important starting point for this restructuring, he wrote, is an understanding of “what makes teachers more effective, for teachers are the heart of the matter” (p.105).

Hattie (2003) described that students account for at least fifty percent in the variance of student achievement relating to their background knowledge and ability, and teachers account for another thirty percent of this variance, with what teachers “know, do and care about [is] the most powerful factor in this learning equation” (2003, p. 2). Hattie also made distinctions between expert and experienced teachers. These distinctions were presented in five distinct dimensions including teachers who a) identify essential representation of their subject(s); b) guide learning through classroom interaction(s); c) monitor learning and provide feedback; d) attend to affective attributes; and e) influence student outcomes. Hattie concluded that expert teachers differ from experienced teachers in terms of their classroom representation, the degree of challenges presented to students, and the depth of critical thinking that students attain. Educators must, Hattie emphasized, seek a deeper representation of teacher excellence and promote teacher expertise and quality.

Gottlieb (2015) examined concepts of good teaching articulated by former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in his speeches on Race to the Top, documenting the Secretary’s most emphasized educational reform topics since No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2001), including teacher knowledge and practice, best practices and artificial intelligence, teacher practices and rule-following, the importance of achievement data and inferences within teacher evaluation, and the responsibilities for teacher evaluation in the new era. Based on Duncan’s ideas,

Gottlieb proposed that teacher quality is an interaction of multiple criteria, “and the honoring of the criteria...and the balancing of multiple aspects of relevant criteria...requires no litmus test that can be applied to teaching excellence” (2015, Kindle edition). Educators must have the courage to expose their flaws, examining weaknesses and partiality in attempts to identify the impact of teacher quality assessment that is “much greater than the sum of its many parts” (2015, Kindle edition).

The Measures of Effective Teaching Project (MET) led by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2012) examined a systemic approach to improved teacher quality in our nation’s schools. Researchers examined teacher quality, conducting over 8,000 observations of teachers, student surveys and analysis of student achievement effectiveness measures to determine how effective teaching has been defined and measured from classroom, district, state and national perspectives. New educational initiatives have been implemented because of the MET Project nationwide, with continued focus on teacher quality and documented student growth gains.

Although research emphasizing the importance of teacher quality is widespread, there has been little agreement on what a quality teacher looks like. Strong (2011) identified four perspectives linked to teacher quality: (1) teacher quality as personal attributes (including race, gender, personality/beliefs/attitudes, and verbal ability); (2) teacher quality as qualifications (including licensure, level of undergraduate and graduate degrees, types of teacher preparation programs, pedagogical knowledge, and levels of professional development), (3) teacher quality

as pedagogical practice (based upon classroom observation, teacher surveys, and student surveys), and (4) teacher quality as teacher effectiveness in promoting learning as measured by student achievement data. The next four sub-sections of the chapter will explore research within the four perspectives.

Personal Attributes of Teachers

Of Strong's (2011) four perspectives of highly qualified teaching, research has identified the focus on personal (psychological) attributes as the most subjective category. Whether directly linking the perception of quality teaching to personality traits or the presentation of self, the research has cited the acknowledgement of subjective impressions spanning a wide range of personal characteristics—from warmth and friendliness to organization, structure and firmness. Personal attributes of caring and compassion and contrasting professional attributes connected to content knowledge and pedagogical practices have both been cited in research.

Researchers' discussions of the importance of personal attributes have emphasized how teachers perceive themselves in the role of teaching and education as a community of practice. Thus, Goffman (1959), Fawkes (2015), Jones and Nisbett (1969), Monson and Snyder (1977), Wenger (1998), and Hargraeves and Fullan all examined teacher attributes in the context of personal identity. On the other hand, the research of Witty (1950), Cruickshank (2000), Stronge (2008), and Noddings (2012) identified specific attributes that teachers should possess in relation to teacher quality. The examination of both categories has been essential to the understanding of the connection between teacher quality and personal attributes.

Goffman (1959) focused on the “presentation of self” through the creation of a dramaturgical metaphor that can enlighten an understanding of the interaction between the actor, the observer(s), and the audience. In this context, the teacher is primarily the actor in a teaching environment but also may serve as an observer and/or a member of an audience depending upon the professional role of the educator at a specific moment in time. Goffman suggested that the ways an individual presents him or herself are determined by the environment in which he or she is engaged, a concept suggesting that individuals make conscious decisions to reveal certain aspects of self in certain situations while concealing other aspects depending upon the audience. Goffman clarified that the attributes of a performer(actor) have distinctive meaning in terms of the environment of interaction. While a teacher may not technically be perceived as an actor, there are qualities of character that are revealed within the context of the interaction with others. Fundamentally, Goffman’s research centers upon the structure of social interaction and the ability of the individual (teacher) to maintain a focused presentation of self in defined situations such as a classroom setting.

Fawkes (2014) expanded on Goffman’s work within this dramaturgical context by emphasizing that individuals present different aspects of themselves in different locations. According to Fawkes, Goffman’s concepts of face, impression management, and symbolic interaction have provided key elements to the common language of social interaction within a given setting. In a classroom setting, according to Fawkes, the presentation of self requires that the interaction between

the actor, observer(s) and audience all have a common understanding through language, nonverbal communication and symbols reflecting the group's purpose.

Jones and Nisbett (1971) complimented the research of Goffman by suggesting that perceptions relating to the causes of behavior within a given context are often quite different for an actor and an observer and that these differences create different attributions (acknowledgments) of a specific interaction. In other words, the observer and the actor are likely to take different perspectives towards the same information or setting. From Jones and Nisbett's perspective, actors attribute their causes of behavior to stimuli that are inherent to a specific situation while observers tend to connect their behavior to the actors themselves. This research raised important questions on how the personal attributes linked to teacher quality depend on the frame of reference of the actor (teacher) versus the observer (student, parent, administrator, or other audience) in an educational setting.

The attribution theory described by Monson and Snyder (1977) connected to Goffman's framework of the presentation of self. Monson and Snyder described how attribution theory provided causal explanations that individuals construct for their own behavior and the actions of others. Actors are more likely than observers to make connections around dispositional explanations for their behavior and its consequences, according to Monson and Snyder. As a result, they are in control of their behavior and its consequences within the context of interaction with observers.

Wenger's (1998) research on the formation of communities of practice made focus on identity an integral part of an overall social theory of learning. Specifically, Wenger indicated two dimensions of identity that have meaning: (1) the

focus of the individual from a social perspective; and (2) the broader context of identification of self within social structures. Wenger cited parallels between identity and practice as reflections of one another, characterizing these reciprocal elements as lived, negotiated, social, reflections of a learning process, a nexus of practice, and local-global interplay. Insisting that individual engagement is a critical component in the creation of communities of practice (e.g. classrooms), Wenger raised questions about how the research surrounding specific personal attributes for teachers connects with the global concept of the creation of a culture of learning amongst students within a classroom.

Hargraeves and Fullan's (2012) collaboration on the existence of professional capital suggested that the recognition of social capital between educators has a great influence on school culture. Specifically, the authors emphasized that collaborative cultures do better than individual ones and that schools with strong professional communities perform more effectively than weaker ones. The authors also cited a continuum of collaboration that included elements of story-telling, help and assistance, sharing, and joint work practices that serve as important reminders of personal attributes reflecting an individual's commitment to transparency, inclusiveness, and willingness to put the needs of others before one's own professional needs.

Researchers have also studied the importance of specific personal attributes to teacher quality, exploring the connection between the personal identity of a teacher and specific personal attributes or characteristics used in the presentation of self. In October of 1950, a Northwestern University professor named Paul Witty

read over ninety-thousand letters that school age children sent to a Quiz Kids radio show about the teacher who helped me the most. From that study, Witty determined that students admire teachers who are “cooperative and have a democratic attitude” (Journal of Education, 1950, p. 217). Qualities most highly rated by the K-12 students included kindness, pleasing appearance and manner, fairness, sense of humor and a positive disposition and consistency in behavior. Witty’s research created groundwork for the importance of personal attributes in teachers that are meaningful to students in the classroom.

Cruikshank’s research on effective teaching (1986) included several research findings over a thirty-year period that he categorized as disparate. Cruikshank drew conclusions from his research over three decades indicating that teachers need to possess skills and attributes to ensure student success by being organized, efficient, task-oriented, knowledgeable, verbally fluent, aware of students’ developmental levels of learning, enthusiastic, clear, self-confident, confident in students’ abilities, friendly and warm, encouraging, attentive, attending, and supportive. He acknowledged the decade of the 1960s as a time when evidence about what makes a good teacher was substantial, proposing that some teachers made more of a difference than other teachers and the behavior of effective teachers could be identified. While there may be a discreet difference between Cruikshank’s descriptions of skills and attributes, his work helped set the foundation for the importance of personal attributes in relation to quality teaching.

Stronge’s (2007) meta-analysis of the study of teacher effectiveness overall included a segment on the teacher as a person. Stronge identified six non-academic

and social/emotional attributes of quality teachers: caring, fairness and respect, interactions with students, enthusiasm and motivation, attitude toward teaching, and reflective practice. He also emphasized critical personal attributes of an effective teacher, including the roles of caring (such as listening, understanding, and knowing students), fairness and respect, social interactions with students, promoting enthusiasm and motivating learning, and a teacher's attitude toward the teaching profession.

According to Noddings (1984), teachers who are successful in building strong relationships with students by their care and compassion are exemplars of teacher quality. Noddings identified an "ethic of care" that she believed must exist in our schools and greater society, acknowledging that the "one-caring" role as a teacher is ever-present in our relationship with students who are "one-cared for" within a moral education model. Noddings insisted the relationship between teacher and student must be sustained to maintain a positive influence over time, stating that schools cannot be caring entities but can support the ethics of caring and the support for caring individuals within the school itself. Thus, a school's culture can positively contribute to the development of attributes of caring within all teachers and staff in support of those in need of care in schools.

Collier (2005) indicated that the influence of caring connects three important assumptions about teacher beliefs and behavior: (1) a caring teacher is committed to his or her students; (2) the influence of caring can motivate teachers to improve their own skills to better meet the needs of their students; and (3) the keystone of teaching is the relationship that is developed between the teacher and students. Collier stated

that caring can only be seen when actions occur that take responsibility for the well-being of another, caring is a binding force within a given community, and caring motivates action in the best interests of others. According to Collier, high teacher efficacy refers to a teacher's belief in his or her ability to make a difference in student learning. The ethics of care within a school system and within individuals in the system bring about this strong belief system.

The literature clearly has established the importance of personal attributes in teachers' abilities to make a difference, their sense of confidence and belonging, and their effectiveness with every student served in classrooms, schools, and districts. Thus, personal attributes must be in the forefront of every conversation about teacher quality. A teacher's presentation of self has been linked to teacher quality in relation to identity of the observers (students) every educator serves. Researchers have also emphasized the importance of a classroom culture of respect and care within the context of a community of practice. While the recognition of personal attributes may be considered subjective, the research has suggested that key personal attributes are critical to the relationships between teachers and students, serving as a foundation for student success.

Pedagogical Skills and Practices

Strong (2011) pointed out that many educational reformers have considered the skills associated with pedagogical skills and practices the most important indices of teacher quality. These reformers have defined quality teachers as those who align instruction and assessments with educational standards such as the Common Core State Standards endorsed by the Chief Council of State School Officers (CCSSO)

and approved by virtually all but a few states since their inception in 2009 and who create learning environments focusing directly on student engagement and reflecting complex cognitive challenges. This sub-section reflects several significant bodies of research relates to elements of teaching directly associated with pedagogical skills and practices and teacher quality.

Danielson's 2007 meta-analysis of research on the framework of teaching has been considered one of the seminal works related to teacher quality overall and pedagogical skills and practices within each of the four domains of teaching as outlined by Danielson. Originally, this meta-analysis was written in partnership with the Education Testing Service, serving as a resource to validate criteria for Praxis III. From that work came the idea of documenting a framework to assist local assessors in the determination of criteria for teacher licensure across the country. The Danielson Framework (as it is commonly known) created four domains: (Domain 1) Planning and Preparation; (Domain 2) The Classroom Environment; (Domain 3) Instruction; and (Domain 4) Professional Responsibilities. The framework's design provided detailed levels of performance for each element directly related to each component under the four domains, including unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished. Each domain had multiple components and multiple elements within each component providing descriptors based upon the performance levels outlined above. In versions now available online, The Danielson Group has also included descriptive "look-fors", which are better defined as actions that might be observed for each element within a given component. Changes to the second edition of the Danielson Framework (2014) included the addition of

frameworks for school psychologists, counselors, and nurses along with specific components relating to assessing student learning and participation in a professional community.

Like Danielson, Marzano (2010) has also been a longtime proponent of teaching and leadership practices in schools and classrooms. His work began with an examination of classroom strategies that work for teachers, followed by a series of research briefs on school leadership and school effectiveness. In the past several years, Marzano's research focus has moved to a philosophy of the art and science of teaching, proposing a list of research-based practices that can and should be implemented to ensure student success.

Specifically, Marzano (2010) asserted that schools and teachers can have a tremendous impact on student achievement if they follow the direction provided by research. His platform suggested that student achievement studies support potential positive impact when interpreted correctly, research on systemic school effectiveness is positive when linked to student achievement, and schools that are highly effective produce results that overcome students' backgrounds. Marzano's research was both school-based and teacher-based, condensing the research into multiple factors for each main category. School-level factors included guaranteed and viable curriculum, challenging goals and effective feedback, parent and community involvement and collegiality and professionalism. Teacher-level factors included the implementation of effective instructional strategies, classroom management, and classroom curriculum design. The research also identified student-level factors (home environment, learned intelligence and background

knowledge, and student motivation). Marzano's school-related and teacher-related factors have challenged educators to use research as a positive tool to improve teacher skills and effectiveness relating to pedagogical skills and knowledge.

Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, and Stone (2012) expanded Marzano's original work concerning classroom instruction. Their work specifically identified discrete research-based pedagogical skills and knowledge that are required to increase student achievement. Teachers who possess and implement these skills and strategies will be recognized as quality teachers in their pursuit of students' overall academic success. The four sections of Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, and Stone's book included (1) creating the environment for learning through objectives and feedback, reinforcing effort and recognition, and cooperative learning; (2) helping students develop understanding through cues, questions, nonlinguistic representations, summarizing, note-taking, and practice; (3) helping students extend and apply knowledge through identified similarities and differences and generating and testing hypotheses; and (4) putting instructional strategies to use through the creation of instructional plans. Perhaps the key contribution of this collaborative research has been the emphasis on teachers creating and implementing instruction plans that incorporate research-based instructional strategies.

Teacher Qualifications

Strong (2011) discussed the role teacher qualifications in teacher quality, responding to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001's requirement that every classroom in the United States would be staffed with a "highly qualified" teacher by the 2005-2006 academic year. This provision inferred that only teachers who

possessed qualifications in terms of licensure and core content expertise were highly qualified, creating a heightened level of concern that not all teachers were qualified to teach. Research, however, has questioned this assumption. Strong's suggested that while teacher qualifications serve an important purpose, these qualifications may not always demonstrate a direct correlation between teacher qualifications (including experience) and teacher quality overall.

Predating the NCLB legislation of 2001 was *A Nation at Risk* (1983), an important report released by the US Department of Education. Citing a *rising tide of mediocrity*, this report received global attention for its comprehensive analysis of the strength of the United States on the global stage. From an educational perspective, *A Nation at Risk* called attention to the fact that our educational system was no longer effective in preparing our youth for the future and that the United States was overcome by competitors across the globe in all facets of industry, commerce and educator. The report advocated more rigorous teacher preparation and licensure standards, sending a message to educators in the United States that the status quo was no longer acceptable and that significant deficiencies in our educational system were present “at a time when the demand for highly skilled workers is accelerating rapidly” (p. 3). The decade that followed created a new mantra of “high skills/low wages”, demonstrating a disparity between the demand for new skills in the workplace that was not being met by our educational system, resulting in too many young Americans only equipped for low wage jobs. “Our nation is at risk” became a battle cry of educators for two decades prior to the end of the 20th Century as

educators sought strategic solutions to the educational risks that were documented in this compelling report.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal legislation in 2001 was created to ensure that teachers would be highly qualified based upon the acquisition of a teacher's degree, the number of credit hours in a specific core subject area, and the attainment of required endorsement credentials based on state teacher licensure requirements. Within this plan was the premise that no child should be left behind because they were not being taught by a highly-qualified teacher, despite student achievement data over a fifteen-year period that showed otherwise. In response to NCLB, states such as Washington created new licensure types, including a Preliminary Teaching License (for new and novice teachers); a Professional Teaching License (for teachers with advanced competencies and experience); a Teacher Leader License (for teachers with demonstrated professional leadership); a Legacy Teaching License (for veteran teachers who do not qualify for the new Professional Teaching License; and a Reciprocal Teaching License for licensed out-of-state teachers while they are working to meet state requirements (State of Washington OSPI, 2016).

These new licensure changes also included authorizations per grade level so that all teaching licenses would have a pre-kindergarten through grade 12 authorization while the list of subject endorsements remained the same. Significant changes in professional development requirements included that (1) educators may renew the preliminary teaching license with 75 continuing or 75 advanced professional development units and may retain their preliminary teaching license

until they meet the qualifications of the professional teaching license; (2) teachers now have additional options for advanced programs to move from the preliminary to the professional teaching license; and (3) the teaching license will no longer require passage of a basic skills test.

NCLB's highly qualified requirement was modified in 2013, when federal requirements of 100% proficiency for every child in literacy (writing and reading), numeracy (mathematical concepts and skills), science and social science were not met by large populations of students in almost every state, especially students of poverty, special needs, and students with language needs. The federal government allowed states who did not meet the national standards to file a waiver that essentially changed the teacher evaluation systems to focus on student academic growth linked to teacher effectiveness. In December 2015, the No Child Left Behind requirements were replaced by the enactment of Every Student Succeeds Act (Ed Review, 2015), signifying a shift to a new concept of teacher quality, with a greater emphasis on teacher effectiveness in lieu of teacher qualifications.

Changes in federal and state teacher licensure qualifications created challenges for district and state policy makers and fueled researchers' interest in teacher qualification. Conducted within the context of evolving federal policy, Darling-Hammond's State of California educational policy review (2002) uncovered evidence that teacher preparation and licensure have a strong correlation with student achievement in reading and mathematics (including before and after controls for student poverty and language). Darling-Hammond's research suggested that policies adopted by states relating to teacher education, licensing, hiring and

professional development make important differences in the qualifications and capacities that teachers bring to the classroom. This analysis provided support for elements of NCLB's teacher qualification changes specific to subject area endorsement requirements, the strengthening of teachers' abilities to teach diverse learners, more comprehensive knowledge and application of teaching strategies supporting rigorous content, and stricter requirements for the documentation of teachers' annual professional development.

Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin and Heilig (2005) asked the question: does teacher preparation matter? Examining a large student data set from Houston, Texas, the research team examined the links between teachers' certification status, experience, and degree levels between 1995 and 2002. Their research also included an examination of Teach for America (TFA) candidates to determine their rate of effectiveness when compared to similarly experienced certified teachers. Their findings concluded that certified teachers consistently produce stronger achievement gains than uncertified teachers. Uncertified TFA recruits were less effective than certified teachers and performed on par with other uncertified teachers. Thus, teacher effectiveness overall had a strong relationship to the teacher preparation received. These researchers challenged states, districts, and preparation programs to develop and expand strong and affordable teacher preparation programs to enable teacher competence upon entry into the profession and to maintain teacher quality over time.

DeAngelis and Presley (2011) examined the relationship between teacher qualifications and school climate and student achievement based upon the students'

academic growth within individual schools. Using data from Chicago schools, the authors examined the specific interplay between teacher qualifications including differences between degree type, the subject in which teachers received their degree, and the acumen of the teacher candidates themselves. Their research also made multiple references to the attention that has been paid on improving the level of teacher qualifications across a school system to ensure that students—regardless of their ethnicity, race, or zip code—had access to highly-qualified teachers. In addition, the researchers examined the possible correlation between teacher qualifications and school climate. The results of this study demonstrated that stronger teacher qualifications and a more positive school climate both contribute to student performance.

Eckert's (2012) analysis of teacher preparation and qualification suggested that there are positive relationships between levels of personal teacher efficacy and general teacher efficacy when teachers have completed more course work and have had lengthier student teaching experiences, resulting in a greater self-confidence in their abilities to teach day-to-day.

Teacher Effectiveness at Improving Student Performance

A final teacher quality research category described by Strong (2011) was teacher effectiveness at improving student academic outcomes. According to Strong, this category captured when “good teaching” (reflecting worthiness of an activity) and “successful teaching” (as measured by intended student outcomes) are combined, the results reflect quality teaching. Strong acknowledged, however, that there may be a variety of intended student outcomes that don't necessarily fall into

the effectiveness category per standard student academic measurements. For example, indicators of success may include college entrance or completion rates, or perhaps a love of learning that is realized because of a quality educational experience. Strong suggested that these indicators could be school or system indicators as opposed to indicators of teacher effectiveness. Therefore, the definition of teacher effectiveness must be clearly defined to demonstrate a direct relationship between student performance and teacher quality and effectiveness.

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (Ed Review, 2015) came with many fundamental changes in the structure of accountability, with the most notable shift a move away from systemic approach at the federal level towards a new system of teacher effectiveness at the state level and a shift in focus from *highly qualified* to *highly effective* teachers. Essentially, the federal government began requiring that responsibility for measurements of teacher effectiveness transfer to state educational governing bodies, now providing more *flexibility* to individual states to determine the standards for measuring teacher effectiveness. The result was an increased emphasis on the teacher's relationship to student academic performance.

Creemers and Kyriakides (2008) studied the dynamics of educational effectiveness research (EER) through an analysis of the history of EER from several perspectives including (1) a disciplinary perspective resulting in the emergence of education production models of Brown and Saks (1986) and Elberts and Stone (1988), based on the assumption that increased inputs led to increased evidence of effectiveness; (2) an economic perspective relating to the production process of an organization; (3) a sociological perspective addressing input factors, measurements

of effectiveness and process variables including school climate, culture and structure; and (4) a psychological perspective which looks at the process of learning. Creemers and Kyriakides identified teacher behaviors that were directly linked to the process of learning: quantity and pacing of instruction, whole class versus small group instruction, structuring of information, questioning of students, reacting to student responses, and handling seatwork and homework assignments. Rosenshine (1983) also examined similar factors relating to instructional time, content, grouping of students, teacher questions and student responses and teacher feedback that became known as elements of a direct instruction model of teaching.

Haycock and Hanushek's (2010) forum on effective teaching posed several key questions relating to how one can readily identify effective teachers and what the educational system must do to increase the number of effective teachers in high-poverty schools and communities. This forum documented that schools in high-poverty areas were assigned less effective teachers than those teachers teaching in low-poverty areas. The authors proposed a comprehensive effort by administrators and policy makers to ensure highly effective teachers in students in high-poverty areas.

Hattie and Marsh's (1996) work on visible-learning was a meta-analysis of over 800 studies relating to student achievement. While this quantitative synthesis identified effect size and influence within the domains of students, teachers, teaching approaches, teacher practices, school, curricula, and home, the importance of this research related to teacher effectiveness was its connection to the teacher, teacher approaches, and teacher practices. Hattie's (1996) research was organized by high,

medium, low, and negative effects in relation to rank, effect size, domain and influence. Within the first twenty-three rankings, most domains cited addressed elements of teaching approaches and teacher effectiveness. While further study is needed in relation to Hattie's comprehensive research, Hattie's work clearly indicated that the role of teacher and teacher approaches are two predominant areas linked to student achievement gains.

Goe's (2007) research synthesis on the link between teacher quality and student outcomes identified several challenges that governing bodies must consider when examining measures of teacher effectiveness. Goe cautioned evaluators that it is impossible to determine which combination of qualifications, characteristics, and practices have contributed to student achievement from a value-added score used in teacher evaluation systems. According to Goe, a further disadvantage teacher effectiveness measures was that they provided no mechanism for predicting high-quality teachers prior to actual teaching. In relation to the use of measurement tools, Goe acknowledged that statewide standardized student achievement tests were not ideal in terms of measuring the effects of changes in instructional practice. Likewise, common measurement instruments used to detect discrete differences in teacher practice, such as four-point Likert scales, were constrained and therefore would be difficult to correlate with student achievement scores to find meaningful, statistically significant effects. In her findings, Goe raised the question of teacher context-specifically asking about the practices that effective teachers in at-risk schools engage in that ensure high levels of student learning.

The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET Project) worked with over 3,000 teacher volunteers to investigate how a set of measures could be identified as effective teaching fairly and reliably (MET Executive Summary, 2013). The specific measures used in this project included classroom observation instruments, student perception surveys, and student achievement gains as noted on statewide assessments and additional cognitively challenging assessments. The MET project sought answers to the questions: (1) could measures of effective teaching identify teachers who better help students to learn; (2) how much weight could be placed on each measure of effective teaching and (3) how could teachers be assured trustworthy results from classroom observations?

The key findings were significant: (1) effective teaching can be measured; (2) balanced weights indicate multiple aspects of effective teaching; (3) adding a second observer increased reliability significantly more than having the same observer score an additional level. As a result of this project, new lessons into teacher effectiveness and how teachers can positively impact student learning included: (1) student perception surveys and classroom observations can provide meaningful feedback to teachers; (2) implementation of specific procedures in evaluation systems can increase trust in the data and results; (3) each measure adds value; (4) a balanced approach is more sensible when assigning weights to form a composite measure; and (5) there is great potential in using video for teacher feedback and for training and assessment of observers. (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012).

In this important project, the role of teacher volunteers was critical in providing an opportunity for researchers to observe, seek feedback from students, and analyze specific academic measures of progress. In a separate but equally important aspect of the MET Project, 4,600 additional teachers explored their beliefs about data-driven instruction, the use of data to monitor and adjust instruction, and dealing with the challenges that digital tools present to teachers who have a desire to use data to drive their instruction. The MET Project and other pertinent research reflected the complexity and the multi-dimensional nature of teacher effectiveness and its importance in the analysis of teacher perception of teacher quality.

Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Quality

This final category in the chapter documents the research that reflects teacher perceptions of teacher quality. Strong (2011) does not mention teacher perceptions within his research categories on the highly-qualified teacher, but the available research presents some important findings and questions on the importance of teacher perception of teacher quality.

Grieve's (2010) research explored characteristics of excellent teachers in Scotland, documenting the changes in their educational system that included a way of acknowledging professionals with the ability, knowledge, and insight to move their profession forward rather than implementing new directives. She cited that the Scottish government suggested five essential elements excellent teachers should possess, including (a) positive attitude; (b) an ability to communicate value to students; (c) good content knowledge and understanding; (d) a teaching repertoire to many ways to impart content; and (e) knowledge and understanding of connections

across curricular areas (Grieve, 2010). According to Grieve, these concepts of reflective practice, adopted by the Scottish educational system, established a rationale for teachers to examine their own attitudes and ideologies about teacher quality that, in turn, may be linked to teacher effectiveness in the encouragement of student learning. Grieve concluded that while all teacher respondents agreed that characteristics analyzed in the study are important for teacher effectiveness, there was a need to improve the quality of the relationship between practitioners and their students through comprehensive continuing professional development.

Watson, Miller, Davis and Carter's (2010) study of teacher perceptions of the effective teacher determined new insights into teacher effectiveness through teachers themselves. Most importantly, the study revealed that very few studies presented in the literature address teachers' perceptions of teacher effectiveness and little is known about the qualities and skills that practicing teachers believed all good teachers should hold.

Summary

Overall, teacher quality has been a popular topic among the last several decades of educational researchers, and as a result, educators currently know a great deal about teacher quality. Teacher quality has been identified as significant factor, perhaps the single most important factor, in student achievement and overall student success. Researchers have viewed teacher quality through many different lenses, and although there no single definition of teacher quality emerges in the literature, there is an enormous amount of theory and data on the ways in which a multiplicity of teacher characteristics influence students. Surprisingly, however, researchers

rarely document teacher perception of teacher quality. Teacher voice on what makes an effective professional educator and how this effectiveness should be measured is mostly silent in the literature.

Chapter 3: Methodology of Study

As stated in chapter one, the purpose of this study was to examine the voices of teachers whose perceptions will hopefully lead us to new insights into teacher quality. This study examined the perceptions of teacher quality among current teachers. It also investigated whether teachers have internalized the measures of accountability in their schools and the extent to which teachers value personal attributes, teacher qualifications, pedagogical skills and practices, and teacher effectiveness at improving student performance as measures of teacher quality.

Specifically, this chapter will discuss the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, and the specific methodology that was followed throughout the completion of this qualitative research study.

Research Design

This study was not a study on the effectiveness of measures of teacher quality. Rather, using a basic qualitative research approach, the study documented interview data from teachers that could be compared according to school size, mission, vision, and specific information based upon school culture and student population. The study also provided an opportunity to determine whether the research on teacher effectiveness and teacher quality has directly impacted teachers' perceptions of their own professional skills. Finally, analysis of data from both private and public school teachers identified relationships that can be beneficial to educators on a larger scale. Teacher interviews shed light on key components of the overall study, including the perception of teachers from public and private schools on the teaching profession, the influence of teacher quality research on perceptions

of teacher quality, and the influence of teacher quality on a culture of quality teaching within a given school or district.

Research Design Rationale

A basic qualitative study design incorporating teacher interviews was an important match for this dissertation because it provided an accurate method to assess teacher perceptions within an authentic environment and in-depth descriptions from each person interviewed. Qualitative research seeks to answer “why” questions that assist us in drawing inferences based upon human experience. Qualitative research provided the platform for exploring teacher perceptions of teacher quality that have been formed by both external measures of quality and each teacher’s pursuit of quality within their own professional boundaries. This research model also reflected several elements of complexity, including labor intensity with data collection, possible data overload, processing and coding data time demands, sampling adequacy, and generalizability of findings and conclusions (Miles and Huberman, 2014).

Overall, the positives of this narrative qualitative research created a clear focus on an individual or a group of individuals that shared similar experiences. Through the teacher interview process, each teacher’s contributions were woven together to create a larger representation that reflected the creation of a culture-sharing group, sharing common teacher perceptions of teacher quality based upon

common experiences and qualifications, personal attributes, pedagogical skills and strategies, and evidence of teacher effectiveness (Creswell, 2013)

Ethical Considerations

With authenticity comes ethical considerations including the use of ethical interviewing processes, the commitment to confidentiality, the sharing of overall purpose of the study, the commitment to refrain from deceptive practices, the sharing of research with the participants, and a commitment of respect for each school community that is represented in the study (Creswell, 2012) According to Peshkin (1993), appropriate standards in qualitative studies must also protect the anonymity of the participants by assigning aliases and, if necessary, creating a composite picture of each school site rather than a specific focus on individuals.

Role of the Researcher

My perspective as a teacher and administrator has contributed to my keen interest in this chosen area of study. I wholeheartedly believe that teacher quality is the most significant factor pertaining to student success and overall measures of success. However, I am perplexed by disconnects between teacher beliefs and current measures of teacher quality, the conflict between our educational system's new measures of teacher quality, and teachers' steadfast beliefs about teacher quality. It is the fundamental reason why I have chosen to explore teacher perceptions of teacher quality-so that I might find answers to pervasive questions that have stayed with me throughout my career. My experiences have shaped my thinking and beliefs about how our profession has historically supported teachers and students in a variety of educational setting. The culture of each school where I

have served has also given me a specific point of view on the issue of teacher quality.

During my own professional journey as a teacher and administrator, I experienced Strong's (2011) four categories of teacher quality and the evolution from internal to external measures of teacher quality. My first teaching position in a rural Oregon school district during the mid-70s to the mid-80s introduced me to a personal attributes approach to teacher quality. Fraught with financial difficulties due to the closure of the local sawmill and inadequate state funding, the district closed its doors twice during my twelve-year tenure. Throughout this challenging time, the community remained resilient and most teachers and staff eagerly returned to reconnect with students and families who had been slighted by situations beyond their control. While little emphasis was placed on teacher quality in formal ways, the underlying belief system honored teachers who were dedicated, resilient, caring, and hopeful. And, it was these values that guided teachers to inspire students to do their very best and parents to celebrate the successes of their children. Although I was not consciously aware at the time, the values clearly articulated in the research linking personal attributes to teaching quality were deeply rooted in this district and school. As a beginning teacher at the time, I felt a sense of pride and commitment to do whatever I could to best serve our students side-by-side with colleagues who were doing the same.

This community of practice (Wenger, 1998) recognized the values of resilience and hard work which I interpreted as elements of teacher quality—yet no such descriptions ever surfaced on any formal measurement system of teacher

quality or effectiveness. The development of an internal sense of quality based upon these characteristics was a significant factor during my early career, forming a conception of the good educator that has stayed with me throughout my professional life. Yet none of these descriptors ever surfaced on any formal measurement of teacher effectiveness during this timeframe. In fact, I have few recollections of any of the formal measures evaluating my success as an educator during my years as a classroom teacher. I reflected upon my overall teaching experience in this community with pride and gratitude, for it created an important foundation for me relating to the importance of personal attributes as a key to providing quality instruction and my internal desire to make a difference.

In the mid-1980s, I moved from teaching into my first administrative position, a transition that forced me to think about teacher quality from another, more systemic perspective. National, state, and local educational reform movements were beginning to heat up during this time, and suddenly I found myself looking at schools through the lenses of *The Nation at Risk* report (1983), Danielson's framework of teaching (2007), and Marzano's *classroom strategies that work* (2003), all addressing what was increasingly interpreted as a crisis in American education. As a result, during my five-year administrative experience in another small rural Oregon school district, I began a shift from a teacher-centered perspective valuing internal characteristics such as personal integrity, virtue, and dedication, to a focus on research-based, externally-defined pedagogical practices as the key indicators of teacher quality.

During this time, Danielson, Marzano and others laid the groundwork to codification of the characteristics of best pedagogical practice, and their work began to drive systemic and administrator-driven change at the district and school level. Their ideas began to appear in school improvement and evaluation plans that were shifting from a more generalizable to specific form, with specific attention now placed on instructional practice. Looking at teacher quality through this pedagogical lens, administrators, like me, asked teachers to demonstrate new pedagogical skills and practices: authentic assessments, formative and summative assessments, standards-based teaching, and differentiation. We were also beginning to implement teacher evaluation systems that held teachers accountable for these practices.

In the early 1990s, I left my public school administrative position to become principal of an all-girls Catholic secondary school, a return to my alma mater in the city where I was raised. This position was also a re-introduction to a previous way of thinking about teacher quality, as a collection of positive personal attributes rather than an externally imposed set of practices. Based on indicators of success such as national Blue Ribbon Awards, a high percentage of educated alumnae at the undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate levels, and annual merit scholarship awards, the public perceived the school and its teachers as excellent. In Catholic schools, according to this perception, teachers are high quality because they possess personal attributes necessary to help students grow both academically and spiritually. Teachers with these attributes, it was assumed, would naturally be fully equipped with the pedagogical skills they needed to ensure successful outcomes for students.

Because of these assumptions, the teachers at this Catholic school, while cognizant of a world of prescription and mandates that were emerging in public school, enjoyed the academic freedom to make professional decisions in their classrooms. In my seven years, as principal in this school, I witnessed the power of individual teachers to make a difference in the classroom and within the school. On the other hand, there were limited opportunities for teachers within this school to improve their pedagogical skills, especially as the school became more diverse and the nature of students' needs changed. In the end, I took away from my private school experience an enhanced appreciation of how personal attributes and the concept of teacher quality can give teachers the confidence to act on their own internal compasses for the betterment of all students. While many teachers were highly skilled in all aspects of a highly-qualified teacher definition per Strong's (2011) framework, it was the personal attributes shared by all teachers that set the stage for our students' overall success.

After seven years as a Catholic school administrator, I returned to the public-school system as principal of a diverse, increasingly poor urban high school within a system of secondary schools that were considered comprehensive neighborhood schools. Students spoke thirty-five languages other than English as their first languages at home. More than fifty percent lived in poverty. The school's language needs and special needs populations were twice the district average. During the decade in which I served at the school, our poverty rate climbed by twenty-five percent mirroring the neighborhood's shift from a majority white to a diverse population of students including Hispanic, Asian, African, African-American, and

Middle Eastern students. The school became a minority majority school. Geographically located in a neighborhood that represented many families experiencing high poverty resulting in high mobility rates in and out of the neighborhood, there was a significant change in the overall perception of the neighborhood as a thriving place to live and grow.

Despite these challenges, I heard stories from teachers and parents about our school being the best-kept secret in town for the richness of diversity within community and the caring environment every student felt at home. These were similar characteristics to those I was accustomed to in my previous schools, yet something was missing in my new school—an overarching emphasis on student achievement. While caring for students and families was (and is) an important backdrop ensuring student success, there was no significant evidence of student achievement gains for any student group at the school other than our white students in the college preparatory track. Clearly, a teacher’s personal attributes alone would not be enough to make significant and positive student achievement gains. Teacher content knowledge and new instructional strategies was needed to ensure every student’s academic success.

Within three years of my arrival, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) became law, forcing teachers to follow qualifications and pedagogical concepts of quality with which many were uncomfortable. The new reality of accountability created by NCLB challenged teachers to differentiate their instruction in ways they were not prepared to deliver. NCLB also brought new requirements to become a highly-qualified teacher, and some teachers did not receive this news well. This

altered many teachers' internal perceptions of quality teaching, and they felt hurt and insulted. NCLB forced many teachers to create plans with goals to meet new federal standards of quality teaching. At this juncture, there was a significant shift of emphasis from teachers' personal attributes to a formalized external set of expectations for all teachers that included the implementation of new pedagogical practices such as reading and writing across the curriculum, literacy and numeracy emphasis within content areas and across grade levels, power standards within and across content areas, and the implementation of creative methods of instruction now required in longer instructional blocks.

With each passing year came increased levels of accountability and transparency at the school and district level, including state report cards, comprehensive school improvement plans, and the possibility of priority school status if students did not achieve annual academic growth targets. Invitations to parents to opt out of established attendance boundaries and to have their children attend more successful schools in the district further altered school populations. The perception of our school moved from a school that was making valiant efforts to meet students' needs to a school that did not meet quality standards per NCLB. While student growth gains were prevalent with our white population of students, students of color plus students who had specific language or learning needs were not meeting annual growth targets for these populations. Special education student populations grew because our school could accommodate more students because of this loss of enrollment due to NCLB requirements. And a loss of students meant a loss of resources that further contributed to our school's challenges to meet the

growing needs of our student population. These enrollment changes coincided with more rigorous teacher quality standards as prescribed by NCLB. Some teachers were frustrated at increased requirements for licensure while other teachers expressed concern at the increasing populations of high needs students that teachers were ill equipped to support.

There were a few silver linings, with federal funds now available through the state and school improvement funds along with grants from non-profit organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which provided funds to state non-profits such as Employers for Educational Excellence to support school reform efforts to personalize schools and decrease the teacher-student ratio and teachers' overall student load. Funding also provided after school tutoring and activity programs for struggling students in the hopes of improving student achievement. These new opportunities were created to address students' academic and social needs and build teacher capacity that became the new code phrase for improved teacher quality.

My school took advantage of every fiscal opportunity to instill the new concepts of teacher quality in the faculty, increasing their capacity to better meet the needs of our changing student population and to produce significant student achievement gains. Specifically, school improvement funds created many new opportunities for teachers to expand their repertoire of skills via professional development sessions specifically linked to school improvement strategies relating to literacy and numeracy, provisions for collegial time to work with other colleagues on writing innovative curriculum and creating new procedures for proficiency-based

assessments, and efforts to improve teacher pedagogical skills and practices. In short, we enhanced elements of teacher quality as we moved towards an emphasis on greater accountability in our schools.

In the end, however, the significant efforts to improve achievement for all students in a small schools' model failed because of a lack of sustained teacher, district, and community support. While teaching in a collaborative environment provided great opportunities for looping, proficiency-based assessments, and integrated teaching, many teachers longed for the good old days of a comprehensive high school when teachers had the freedom to explore their own classroom, admired and trusted because of their personal attributes and effort. We had reached a plateau of change that required teachers to adapt to new, externally imposed standards of pedagogy and highly qualified teaching. Teachers grew weary of internalizing the new standards of teacher quality and during my tenth (and last year) as principal in this school, the district decided to return to a comprehensive school structure for the next school year. Looking back at this decade, it was a time when teachers who once proudly displayed positive personal attributes as their definition of teacher quality were now forced to implement complex accountability measures. As this new definition of teacher quality took hold, teachers within our school faced difficult challenges as they attempted to redefine teacher quality from within.

I learned many important lessons during my time in this school. Perhaps the biggest lesson was the degree to which teachers in our public system were asked to significantly change their beliefs about teacher quality. These changes became uncomfortable for many. The personal attributes that once defined teacher quality

for decades now changed to a new system of accountability measured solely based upon qualifications, pedagogical skills, and teacher effectiveness. This fundamental shift of teacher quality definitions altered the internal perceptions of many teachers as these external measures of accountability were implemented. Required changes were most significant for teachers in schools within our district, including mine, who served in schools with higher diversity of students overall. Here, teachers personalized these feelings of the haves and have-nots amongst the teaching core. Many teachers' attitudes changed with the realization that personal attributes and qualifications alone would give way to new demands and measures of accountability and teacher effectiveness. My questions about the degree to which teachers internalized these new measures of teacher quality-holding teachers responsible for their collective students' academic growth-was an important inspiration for this research study.

These experiences were not uncommon for those who served as teachers and administrators over the past thirty-five years, from the time of A Nation at Risk to The Every Student Succeeds Act. My roles as a teacher and administrator gave me certain perspectives and questions about school size, diversity, the effects of socio-economic class, and, most importantly, the questions surrounding teacher perceptions of teacher quality. At the same time, the culmination of these varied experiences motivated this research with a passion to further explore teacher perceptions of teacher quality and the significance that measures of teacher quality may or may not have in the critical change that is needed to best meet students' needs in the twenty-first century.

Population and Participants

Teacher participants included three teachers each from four selected schools, for a total of twelve teachers. These schools included: Two private (Catholic) schools including (1a) one large (more than 1,000 students) Catholic school whose students reflected a relatively high socio-economic population and (1b) one small (fewer than 1,000 students) Catholic school, whose students reflected a relatively low socio-economic population; and two public schools including (2a) one large public school whose students reflected a relatively high socio-economic population; and (2b) one mid-size public school, whose students reflected a relatively low socio-economic population.

Darling-Hammond (2006) suggested that teachers who have less experience, fewer pedagogical skills, and less evidence of teacher effectiveness are more likely to teach in a school where higher poverty exists. Thus, the examination of socio-economic populations of students within the four identified schools is important to address this possible bias that is consistent with the literature.

Each school's administrator nominated three teachers within each school according to years of teacher experience. The selection of teachers in each school based upon experience levels was a key component cited by Young (2012) in his study of teacher quality. Hargraeves and Fullan (2012) also cited the importance of teacher experience in professional capital in identifying teachers in different career stages. The six categories described by Hargraeves and Fullan included: (1) Phase 0-3 years: Commitment; (2) Phase 4-7 years: Identity and efficacy in the classroom; (3) Phase 8-15 years: Managing changes and growing tensions; (4) Phase 16-23

years: Work-life transitions and Challenges to sustaining motivation; (5) Phase 24-30 years: Challenges to sustaining motivation; and (6) Phase 31+ years: Sustaining/declining motivation.

For purposes of this study, these six categories were merged into three categories. Each school nominated one teacher reflecting 0-7 years of overall experience in teaching; one teacher between 8-20 years of overall experience in teaching; and one teacher who had 20 or more years of overall teacher experience.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedures

Administrator Interviews. Interviews were conducted with each school's administrator prior to the teacher interview process. These interviews were conducted in mid-September 2015. Each administrator's interview was semi-structured, open-ended, audiotaped, and subsequently transcribed.

The administrator interview included a discussion of the school's teacher evaluation system and how it was implemented, a review of any documents that reflected the details relating to the school's teacher evaluation system (if available), and a discussion of the teacher nomination process according to the stated levels of experience. Each administrator was asked to identify multiple teachers in each of the three experience categories with priority established in terms of first, second and third choices in each category in the event a nominated teacher declines to participate. Refer to the appendices for sample administrative interview questions.

Teacher Interviews. Once each administrator nominated three teachers, a letter of introduction was sent to each teacher nominee describing the dissertation study and asking for their approval to participate in the study. The target date to

send and receive responses from the nominated teachers from each school was September 30th, 2015.

During October 2015, after the teachers have been confirmed in every school, a schedule for 1:1 teacher interviews was created. Each school's teacher interview was conducted as soon as it could be scheduled. For example, School A's interviews were held the week of October 5th-9th on either a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday per each teacher's schedule. Schools B, C, and D were scheduled during the weeks of Oct 12-16, Oct 19-23 and Oct 26-30, 2015 respectively. However, a problem receiving confirmation from one of the participating schools delayed the overall teacher interview schedule.

Each teacher interview was conducted as a semi-structured, open-ended interview within a forty-five to sixty-minute time frame; each interview was audiotaped and transcribed. I took field notes at the time of the interview. The location for each teacher interview was at the teacher's school site in a private and comfortable room on campus. The teacher interviews included eight open-ended questions with follow up probes. Open-ended questions used for the 1:1 teacher interviews focused on the perceptions of the individual teacher as it related to teacher quality and sub-categories outlined in the research of Strong (2011) along with teacher perceptions relating to measurements of teacher quality. Specific teacher interview questions can be found in the appendices A.

Each interview was transcribed and sent to the teacher for editing. There were no teacher recommendations for changes to the original transcript. All edited

transcripts were then coded. Administrator interviews were transcribed and coded without administrative feedback.

Data Analysis

It was a challenge to ensure that the data was organized to ensure that all data has value. The coding of data became an opportunity to consolidate all aspects of the data, to glean the most important elements of the data pertaining to the research question. The coding methodology were conducted in two stages: First Cycle and Second Cycle coding (Miles and Huberman, 2014). First cycle coding examined data in chunks and second cycle coding worked with the analysis of first cycle coding itself. For this qualitative study, first cycle coding methods included the following foundational approaches: descriptive, in vivo, and process coding. Descriptive coding included the assignment of labels that summarize a passage or small section of qualitative data. In the in vivo coding process coding stages, words or phrases directly from the participant's transcript were recorded as codes. After the data were thoroughly analyzed through the coding processes, analysis of the data through triangulation was implemented to determine possible themes.

Summary

The methodology outlined in this chapter addresses the specific data collection system that was incorporated during the study to collect valid data essential to the research questions surrounding teacher quality. Teacher responses were acknowledged in relation to their perceptions of teacher quality and these perceptions provided important insight into the ongoing exploration of improved teacher quality within the profession.

Chapter 4: Results

The first three chapters of this dissertation provided an overall structure to the research questions of teacher perception of teacher quality, analyzing existing research related to this important question using Strong's (2011) four research categories—personal attributes, teacher qualifications, pedagogical skills and practices, and teacher effectiveness at improving student performance—as a theoretical framework.

Participating schools were chosen based upon several specific qualifications. Two public schools (one large, one mid-size) and two private (Catholic) schools (one large, one small) were considered as possible participants. From there, schools that served high socio-economic populations versus schools that served low socio-economic populations were also considered. Once four schools that met the criteria—public or private, large or small, serving low poverty versus high poverty populations—were determined, a letter of invitation to each school's principal was sent followed by a phone call and a subsequent interview with each of the principals. During the administrative interview, the principal was asked to nominate three teachers, one beginner, one mid-career, and one experienced. Principals also nominated additional candidates in each category should the top nominees choose not to participate.

Teachers nominated by their principal were sent a letter and e-mail invitation to participate followed by a phone call that confirmed each teacher's willingness to participate. After teachers confirmed their interest, interview dates and times were set individually as teachers responded to the invitation at various times. At least six

of the twelve initial teacher invitations were turned down, requiring the contact of additional nominees.

Pseudonyms for teachers, administrators and schools were created to ensure that all identities were kept private. Interviews were conducted with the principals of each of the four participating schools to determine how teacher quality was measured and communicated to teachers at the school as well as the greater school community. Teacher interviews were then conducted in each school. Teachers were provided a copy of the teacher interview questions (found in the Appendix A) at the time of the interview. Each interview was conducted in a private location on the teacher's campus mutually agreed upon by both the teacher and me, with 90% of the interviews occurring in a teacher's classroom or adjacent office or conference room on the school site. In one case, a request was made to meet at a local coffee shop near the teacher's home as the interview was conducted on a weekend at the request of the participant.

The overall findings from the interviews are presented in two distinct sections. The first section includes a review of findings from the teacher interviews, grouped according to Strong's (2011) four research concepts of highly qualified teachers. The discussion of comments related to each research category are organized by school, followed by a comparison among schools that addresses similarities and differences of teacher perceptions in public and private schools and in schools serving differing socio-economic student populations.

Section two provides a summary of the systems used for measuring teacher quality at each school based on data gathered from the four participating school

administrators and a discussion of the relationship between the measurement systems and the teachers' perceptions of teacher quality.

The findings presented in this chapter serve to answer the following research questions:

1. How do high school teachers perceive teacher quality?
2. How do the perceptions of teacher quality in selected private schools compare to those in the selected public schools?
3. How do perceptions of teacher quality compare to schools with different socio-economic demographics?
4. How do high school administrators measure teacher quality in the selected schools and what measurements do they use? How are the measures implemented? How is feedback to teacher communicated?
5. Do teacher perceptions of teacher quality link to existing internal and external measures of teacher quality?

Section One: Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Quality

This section organizes the teacher interview comments on teacher quality according to Strong’s four research categories: personal attributes, teacher qualifications, pedagogical skills and practices, and teacher effectiveness in improving student performance. Within each of these categories, findings are grouped by school and the interview participants in those schools. Schools A and B represent Catholic (private) schools and Schools C and D represent public schools in the same school district. All four schools serve students in the same geographical area in an urban/suburban setting with Schools A & D representing schools serving a lower socio-economic student population while the other two schools represent service to a middle to higher socio-economic student population.

Table 1

School Profile for Schools A, B, C & D – 2015-2016 Academic Year

Category	School A	School B	School C	School D
Public/Private	Private (Catholic)	Private (Catholic)	Public	Public
Enrollment	500	1,200	1,700	1,400
Overall School Diversity – Race, SPED, ELL, Poverty, other	Above average student representation in all categories of diversity as compared to other private schools of similar size and program distinction.	Below average student representation in all categories of diversity as compared to other private schools of similar size and program distinction.	Below average student representation in all categories of diversity as compared to other public schools of similar size and program distinction.	Average student representation in all categories of diversity as compared to other private schools of similar size and program distinction.
Academic Distinctions	College/Work Ready Corporate Internship Program	College Preparatory/Advanced Placement (AP) Program	College Preparatory/ International Baccalaureate Program	College Preparatory/ Advanced Placement (AP) & AP Scholars Programs

Other Distinctions	Religious affiliation; Independent Status within Archdiocese/Diocese; Nationally recognized network of participating schools.	Religious affiliation; Independent Status within Archdiocese/Diocese; Nationally recognized within a cadre of Catholic schools from the same religious affiliation and for academic/extra-curricular programs.	Comprehensive HS academic program; One of nine high schools in a public-school system representing over 20,000 9-12 students; Nationally recognized academic/extra-curricular programs.	Comprehensive HS academic program; One of nine high schools in a public-school system representing over 20,000 9-12 students; State recognized academic/extra-curricular programs.
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RACE – European/Caucasian; African/African American; Asian; Latino; Native American; Mixed Race

ELL = English Language Learners

ETHNICITY: Hispanic/Non-Hispanic; Country/region of origin

POVERTY= Qualification for Free or Reduced lunch, Fee waiver based upon Federal Income Guidelines

SPED = Special Education

Teacher Qualifications as an Indicator of Teacher Quality

School A (Private Small Low SES). The three teachers interviewed in School A possessed varying years of experience and all three—the entry level teacher (A1), the mid-career teacher (A2), and the most experienced teacher (A3)—identified content expertise and mastery as a key teacher qualification. Teacher A1 identified experience as an important qualification, pointing out that through trial and error with lesson design, planning, and implementation, experienced teachers generate and execute higher quality lessons. Similarly, A3 suggested that experienced teachers who stay current with their content area, “improve their craft,” and teach in a more differentiated way. On the other hand, none of the teachers saw certification and licensure as related to teacher quality.

Teacher A2 was the most insistent, candidly claiming that there is no correlation between quality teaching and teacher licensure. “It’s pretty open-ended,” she contended, “and doesn’t appear to have to do with things that you have to do with what you’re teaching.”

In summary, the teachers in School A generally agreed that content expertise and experience were the qualifications most connected to teaching excellence. All three spoke of content expertise and experience in their classroom that led to better lesson design and delivery, especially at a school with the unique work-experience structure of School A. Licensure and certification, on the other hand, had little impact.

School B (Private Large High SES). The three teachers interviewed in School B also represented varying years of experience in the content areas of English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Social Studies. Possessing a degree in comparative literature and performing arts but without a degree in education, teacher B1 emphasized the importance of content expertise over teacher licensure. Teacher B2 spoke of the need for teachers of mathematics to stay up-to-date in their content area. “I’ve taken classes on mathematical instructional practices,” she stated, “learning how to present to students and to keep up with effective instructional practices.” Professional development is the key to maintaining one’s qualifications, according to B2. Teacher B3 raised a question about the difference between content knowledge, as demonstrated through content area exams, and the ability to convey that knowledge to students in the classroom.

Overall, the teachers in School B agreed that content area expertise is a critically important teaching qualification. They mentioned nothing about initial licensure, but they emphasized the need for ongoing professional development for teachers that can address lesson design/delivery, ongoing expertise, and implementation of instructional skills and practices.

School C (Public Large High SES). The three teachers interviewed in Public School C represented varying levels of experience and three content areas: World Languages (C1), English/Language Arts (C2) and Social Studies (C3). Teacher C1, an entry level World Languages teacher, emphasized the importance of being an expert in language development and proficiency. She also cited the relationship between experience and teaching expertise. Teacher C2 also expressed the need for content area expertise, and unlike most of the interviewed teachers, acknowledged the importance of a credentialing program and a Master's degree, even though these qualifications do not guarantee quality. Continuing education programs that build one's capacity within a given content area is another key, according to teacher C2. Teacher C3 also stressed the importance of keeping up with the ever-changing educational focus that require new ways of thinking. On the other hand, C3 had questions about the influence of graduate school on one's teaching. A teacher's commitment to lifelong learning and curiosity are *huge* indicators of quality, according to C3, but not all who take graduate courses have these characteristics. "You can certainly have highly qualified teachers who aren't actually good educators, in my opinion," C3 stated. Although appreciative of the school district's support for teachers taking graduate classes, she was derisive of

“teachers who are taking classes that aren’t impacting their education (and making a difference for students).” In summary, the teachers representing School C agreed that content expertise were a key teacher qualification. They had less agreement on the importance of licensure and graduate coursework.

School D (Public Mid-Size Low SES). Teachers represented in School D included an entry level teacher in English/Language Arts with an ESOL background (D1) and experienced teachers (D2 and D3) in Social Studies and World Languages respectively. Teacher D1 cited a teacher’s participation in a teaching preparation program or a graduate program as important qualifications, providing opportunities for teachers to stay up-to-date with new ideas and research. D1 shared how specific experiences working with diverse populations of students in an undergraduate teacher preparation program strengthened her teaching. Teacher D2 considered the combination of a strong educational background and experience as the key teaching qualifications. At the same time, D2 admitted that not all qualified teachers are quality teachers, pointing out that “there are a lot of teachers who can pass an exam but they have absolutely no idea what to do with a room full of kids.” Experience and continued learning were more dependable qualifications, according to D3. She shared the experience of teaching an AP Social Science class for eight years, then being assigned to teach a new AP Social Science course. Experience teaching a previous AP course was helpful, but a commitment to new learning were also necessary.

In summary, the School D teachers, although representing differing subject areas and years of experience, all believed that learning whether in a preservice

licensure program, a graduate program, professional development, or through experience, were the key qualification of effective teachers. Good teachers are committed to life-long learning.

Teachers representing both private and public schools commented that teacher licensure, while important as an entry point into the profession, does not satisfy the professional needs of teachers throughout their careers. Teachers spoke of the need for content area expertise and the commitment to content-area learning that teachers must make over time. Teaching experience was also an important qualification for the interviewees. Licensure was clearly less important to the teachers. Some saw it as potentially useful but not a guarantee. Others were more skeptical, with one teacher commenting that “teacher licensure is a joke!” and several noting that not all highly qualified teachers are quality teachers.

In addition to these perceptions of formal teacher qualifications, the teachers raised several questions about the nature of content expertise, i.e., the most valuable types of learning for teachers. These questions included: what is most important learning, teaching skills, content knowledge or affective dispositions? how do teachers keep up with new social, cultural, and educational development? and how can teachers, particularly veteran ones, become culturally competent?

There were no clear differences between public and private school teachers’ views on teacher qualifications. Public school teachers have always needed a valid teacher license issued by a state licensure agency after successful completion of a teacher education program at an accredited college or university. But for years, private schools had the flexibility to hire educators that did not necessarily possess a

teacher license to document of their degree and provide evidence of content expertise. All current schools—private and public—have undergone rigorous accreditation processes, and with a few exceptions, licensure requirements have become important for all schools. As a result, there were no significant differences in teacher responses about licensure and other qualifications. Teachers from both school categories inferred that teacher licensure is necessary but not the only criteria. It is a means to a greater end of opportunity for teachers to pursue their aspirational goals to become an educator who makes a difference in the lives of their students.

In contrast, there were some several differences in responses between teachers in Schools A and D, serving a more diverse and lower socio-economic student populations and teachers representing Schools B and C, serving a higher socio-economic population. Key among these contrasts were differences content expertise. In Schools A and D, teachers associated content differentiation and culturally responsive teaching with content expertise. In Schools B and C, teachers spoke primarily about subject area knowledge needed to offer a wide-array of challenging courses. Teachers at these schools saw a hierarchy of teachers, with higher quality teachers teaching AP or honors courses. Such teachers also had esteem among parents and students who, according to one interviewee, considered them “amazing, incredible, [and] one-of-a kind” versus other teachers who were merely “dedicated and hard-working.” In contrast, teachers in Schools A and D did not compare their subject area preparation or course assignments to that of colleagues. Instead, the possession of the skills necessary to help all students succeed were valued.

Personal Attributes as an Indicator of Teacher Quality

School A (Private Small Low SES). Teacher A1 described the concept of student-centered teaching and relevance as examples of how personal attributes reflected quality teaching. This teacher also talked about the importance of creating a culture of learning where students are at the center of the work and that teachers are there to guide students' learning. Teacher A2, on the other hand, referenced the need to reflect and analyze what works and what doesn't work in class, paying attention to students' perspectives. She also emphasized organization and communication skills both in and outside the classroom. Teacher A3 emphasized the importance of possessing the belief system and core values upon which her Catholic school were founded. She also emphasized the importance of compassion, flexibility, sense of humor, and a commitment to lifelong learning both in and outside of the classroom.

In every case, teachers at School A identified the ability to form relationships with students as critically important personal attribute for teachers. It is also noteworthy that only the most experienced teacher (A3) made a direct reference to the faith-based environment of school and the importance of values consistent with a faith-based culture.

School B (Private Large High SES). Teacher B1 spoke extensively about the presence of God as the number one priority when discussing personal attributes linked to teacher quality. Because of this individual's commitment to religious life within the affiliation of this Catholic secondary school, this individual believed that a commitment to ensuring that every child (student) knows that they are loved must

always serve as the foundational attribute for a teacher. Not surprisingly, compassion, forgiveness, and openness in honoring each person's gifts were also paramount attributes for this teacher. In addition, Teacher B1 considered trust between teacher and students as the ultimate basis of a teacher's authority.

Teacher B2 emphasized the importance of caring about students and their success. B2 also discussed the importance of collaboration and collegiality, reflecting on the helpful mentoring provided by others as key to her growth as a Math teacher. B3 also spoke about the importance of demonstrating care for one's students. A sense of humor, the ability to take your job but not yourself seriously, empathy, accountability, the ability to connect with students, and a memory of one's own background as learner were stated as personal attributes that link directly to quality teaching.

In summary, the teachers in school B differed in their emphasis on specific attributes, but all three teachers identified the Gospel values of compassion and care for others as the foundation for supporting each student as a person and a learner and creating a positive learning environment.

School C (Public Large High SES). Teacher C1 spoke of the importance of modeling for students how to interact with society and how to be polite human beings. Quality teachers also maintain authority by treating students as people and by showing their human side through self-disclosure, according C1. They are compassionate, acknowledging how challenging adolescence can be and the many reasons for missing homework or being late to class. They also understand when and how to use praise with students.

Teacher C2 spoke of the importance of personal attributes that created an environment where teachers are more accessible to students and able to connect with kids on a professional level. These attributes included the ability to talk with students “at their level” and in a way, that they “really hear you.” A teacher should also have high standards, be approachable, and be willing to work hard.

Teacher C3 believed the importance of key personal attributes is enormous for students but did not believe in a one-size-fits-all categorization of attributes. Rather, she believed that students grow by learning from different people with different styles. Still, qualities such as flexibility and advocacy for students are important for all teachers, according to C3.

Overall, the teachers in School C emphasized personal attributes that promote a student’s socio-emotional well-being. Teachers are the center of responsibility for helping students grow, they highlighted, and modelling positive attributes such as authenticity, transparency, and flexibility establishes relationships that promote such growth.

School D (Public Mid-Size High SES). Although many teachers view themselves as introverted and shy, Teacher D1 acknowledged that being outgoing with students is an important personal attribute for engaging students. This new teacher believed, however, that students benefit from a wide range of different teachers. Introverted students can use personally shy but engaging teachers as examples of how to overcome elements of shyness in the classroom. Teacher D1 also viewed it as important for teachers to share personal examples of their own struggles in school. For example, she shared her experiences as an English language

learner. This helped students relate to her and to view their personal struggles in a positive way.

Teacher D2 cited classroom organization and management as critical personal attributes that allow a teacher's personality to emerge in the classroom. Caring for students, and the openness to be viewed as a caring adult were also critical for this teacher, alongside content knowledge, a commitment to improvement, and keeping relevant to the interests and issues of teenagers. Being a positive role model helped teachers build relationships with students, according to D2: "I think kids like young adults who help them become young adults."

Teacher D3 spoke about accessibility to kids, a sense of humor, authentic responses, and other personal attributes that establish rapport and relationships between a teacher and her students. The teacher of World Languages also understands the importance of cultural awareness, providing space for each student to represent her unique self and tell her unique stories.

In summary, despite some specific differences, all School D teachers emphasized the importance of getting to know students well and reaching out to every student through culture, self-disclosure and relevancy. They suggested that this ensures students know that classrooms are caring, safe, respectful, engaging, and fun.

Personal Attributes: Themes and Patterns Among Schools

Several overarching themes regarding the perceived personal attributes of quality teachers emerge in the qualitative data provided by the twelve participants in this study. First and foremost is belief that care and compassion for students must be

present in transparent and authentic ways for every student in every classroom. Care and compassion allowed teachers to connect and interact with students. Teachers also described the ability to relate to students as a key factor in creating relevance and a culture of learning and collaboration in the classroom. The interviewees also praised teachers who maintained organized and structured classroom environments. This showed respect for the needs of every student, regardless of their ability level or personal, adolescent challenges.

In addition to these overarching themes, the interviewees presented a diverse list of specific attributes, emphasizing that students benefitted from learning to adapt to different attributes and personality styles of their teachers. Unique teacher identity should be valued by students and within the school itself. Likewise, both teachers and students should be aware and respectful of cultural differences among those in the classroom.

The interview comments about a quality teacher's personal attributes varied little between private and public schools. Teachers in both Catholic schools referred to the importance of a Catholic value system but the perceived specifics of this system mirrored the attributes valued in the public schools. In both public and private schools, teachers viewed care and compassion for students as the number one attribute of a quality teacher.

Likewise, responses were similar across schools with different socio-economic compositions. While some teachers in low-SES, School A emphasized a commitment to "students less fortunate," there was no evidence that teachers differentiated personal attributes based on social or economic class.

Pedagogical Practices as an Indicator of Teacher Quality

School A (Private Small Low SES). Teacher A1 equated School A's commitment to student-centered learning and differentiated lesson design with quality classroom teaching, while Teacher A2 discussed a variety of specific lesson activities in mathematics, including warmups, review of previous lessons, emphasis on vocabulary, and the use of illustrations to help students visualize concepts. Teacher A3 emphasized using different strategies like instructional blocks of varying lengths and discussed the effectiveness balancing a variety of strategies, including group work, debates, oral presentations, and teacher-centered content delivery. Overall, the teachers in School A emphasized specific instructional strategies, not the use of standards, as the pedagogical mark of a quality teacher. At no time did any School A teacher identify content area standards, curriculum, or assessments as valued pedagogical practices.

School B (Private Large High SES). Teacher B1 received no pedagogical training with her degree in contemporary literature and the performing arts, so when asked the about the pedagogical linked to quality teaching, B1's response indicated a limited technical knowledge related to teaching strategies but a high level of resourcefulness and a sincere commitment to learn. She has come to recognize the importance of a lesson plan and "first five minute" activities that engage students and pull them into the lesson. B1 also valued the inclusion of something audio-visual to catch students' attention and applications that are fun and engaging for students. She described herself as a "digital native" and has used "bring your own device" strategies, while also seeking to learn more about critical thinking and the

use of additional thinking strategy tools such as graphic organizers and essential questions.

In contrast, Teacher B2 identified specific, highly technical pedagogical skills with quality teaching. She valued the ability to use the school's portal system to provide immediate feedback on the rate and level of student learning in the classroom. She also was convinced that the iPad was a powerful tool to support student learning and believed that mathematics teachers should focus on application activities.

Teacher B3 praised the importance of pedagogical skills, convinced that the "real skill that a master teacher has to learn is which pedagogy works for them." Because one skill or lesson might work extremely well for one teacher but not for another, teachers cannot distill good teaching down to a set list of strategies. Emphasizing the concept of academic freedom, B3 believed that good pedagogical practice is individualized, that teachers must be given the freedom to "find their way" in relation to pedagogical decision-making. For herself, B3 emphasized confidence and understanding the "how" of teaching but students easily will recognize when a teacher does not understand what she is doing. B3 emphasized critical thinking and writing skills, and provided multiple higher order thinking options for students when they are studying literature, including creating music videos and taking stances on issues.

In summary, teachers in School B placed a high value on pedagogical skills and practices. They were reflective about their teaching methods and discussed multiple ways to engage and challenge students. Teachers discussed pedagogical

practices they used, but also valued the freedom to choose among available strategies. Each of the interviewed teachers at School B spoke with confidence that teachers should be pedagogical learners, professionals committed to ensuring that students are engaged and ultimately successful.

School C (Public Large High SES). Teacher C1 identified the fundamental differences between content knowledge and instructional knowledge, emphasizing a belief that instructional practices are paramount to students' engagement and quality teaching. Teaching four different levels of a World Language, C1 constantly seeks new instructional strategies applicable at each level, especially methods of engagement such as tableaux and differentiated instructional strategies, which she believed are the key to effective language instruction. Teacher C2, a teacher of English Language Arts, emphasized the importance of using pedagogical practices that shift from a "sage on the stage" to a "student-centered classroom." This is not a one-size-fits-all approach, however. With standards identifying key skills that need to be achieved by students at each grade level, teachers demonstrated flexibility on how to teach a specific text. Some teachers co-plan; others use interdisciplinary strategies; others something else. Developing new methods is useful, it takes time, and according to C2, time for planning is always limited.

Teacher C3 also saw new pedagogical skills were necessary to improve teacher quality and emphasized that a school, as a system, needs to build in collegial collaboration and critical thinking opportunities. Like many of the other teachers, C3 acknowledged that good pedagogy at one school may not necessarily be good pedagogy at another school. Different students and communities have different

needs. According to C3, strong pedagogical leadership is needed to ensure that methods match the needs of students and community as well as the school's vision.

In summary, all three teachers in School C emphasized the importance of pedagogical skill in quality teaching. At the same time, each focused on academic freedom and autonomy to choose collaboration with colleagues or not, to choose certain pedagogical strategies or not, agreeing to common assessments but choosing differentiated learning strategies. The three interviewed teachers from School C reflected a common belief in the value of pedagogy and a sense of confidence in their ability to choose good strategies that will ensure student are success.

School D (Public Mid-Size High SES). Teacher D1 spoke of the importance of pedagogical skill for good teaching. But, she viewed mastery in a unique way, reflecting on best pedagogical practice through the eyes of students. D1 emphasized the importance of the feedback from students, based on questions like “what assignments did you enjoy this quarter?” and “what things did you find stressful or challenging?” D1 described how she relentlessly seeks student input, using surveys that are then discussed in class.

Teacher D2 valued consistency and routines that help students understand what is expected of them. She follows consistent practices for daily objectives, warm-up activities, work within notebooks, development of study skills, and student engagement. The routine may be different depending on the course content (US History vs. AP US History, for example). In most classes, D2 uses Cornell Notes, a school wide strategy based on the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program, emphasizing writing, inquiry, collaboration, and reading.

Teacher D2 also spoke extensively about the importance of aligning pedagogical practice with identified standards. In another State and school, she and other teachers worked collaboratively to seek agreements on student outcomes and assessments, the creation of key standards, and the pedagogical practices necessary to help all students experience success. Teachers in her current school view this practice as rigid, and D2 is thankful she had an opportunity to learn these pedagogical techniques.

An experienced teacher of World Languages, teacher D3 valued instructional strategies aimed toward goals such as language proficiency, cultural awareness, and student engagement. D3 saw good pedagogical practices encouraging students to stretch, grow and learn.

In summary, the teachers in School D all valued pedagogical skill, especially practices that stimulated student engagement. They viewed pedagogy through the lens of their specific disciplines, however, and two of the three did not volunteer opportunities for collaboration or guidance in their respective content areas. In contrast, teacher D2 valued pedagogy linked to standards and developed through collaborative discussion.

Pedagogical Practices: Themes and Patterns Among Schools

All teachers interviewed strongly associated effective pedagogical practice with quality teaching. Although teachers identified a wide variety of valued practices, a consistent theme among the twelve was the value of pedagogy emphasizing student engagement and critical thinking skills. Several other pedagogical themes were identified by more than one teacher. For example, several

teachers emphasized technology as tool for learning, including specific strategies such as “bring your own device”; iPad technology, and efforts to bridge the digital divide. Others stressed student-centered practices encouraging creativity, including project-based learning. Several teachers emphasized the importance of planning and preparation, including practices such as lesson design, teachers’ classroom routines, and teacher self-reflected in both lesson design and post-lesson analysis. Finally, all teachers but one did not connect content standards to pedagogical practice. Teacher D2, who spoke of the alignment between standards and the best pedagogical practices implemented in classrooms, is the only exception among the teachers interviewed.

Despite these themes, most teachers talked about pedagogical practice in general terms. Except for Advancement for Individual Determination (AVID) instructional strategies, there was no direct discussion of specific pedagogical approaches commonly mentioned in the literature. There were also no distinct differences between the comments from teachers in private and public schools. Specific school patterns emerged depending on the school vision and professional development, but these seemed to have no connection to public or private status. All teachers spoke in general terms of goals that centered around student engagement, critical thinking and relevancy for students and these values are shared by all teachers in private and public schools.

On the other hand, socio-economic status within the school impacted teacher understanding of the importance of pedagogical practice. Representing schools with higher percentages of diverse student groups including race, ethnicity, social class,

and learning needs, teachers in Schools A and D frequently referred to conversations at each of their schools regarding the need for culturally responsive teaching strategies to better reach their students. School A's unique structure places students in a work-study environment that provided experiences across the metropolitan area expanded their understanding of a more global world. In School D, teachers discussed strategies to keep students in school and reduce the dropout rate for those students of color who were not regularly attending school. The equity focus in both schools is intended to link classroom learning needs to the school's overall culture and climate. Teachers from Schools B and D, on the other hand, emphasized offering a variety of courses that are challenging, rigorous, and representative of each school's overall success.

Teacher Effectiveness at Improving Student Performance as an Indicator of Teacher Quality

School A (Private Small Low SES). Teacher A1 commented on the importance of analyzing data on student achievement. Quality teachers take responsibility for student achievement in their classrooms, according to A1, generating data about student content knowledge. Department conversations, on the other hand, are often impractical discussions of individual student needs with no real emphasis on student achievement data across the content area or grade levels. A1 emphasized the variety of summative assessments that teachers use in the classroom to generate achievement data. For example, many teachers use debates as a culminating activity as a confirmation of students' content knowledge. The best teachers have a deep understanding of what knowledge is demonstrated in the

debates. They also reflected the ways in which achievement data point to on adjustments in teaching to ensure student success.

Teacher A2 discussed how good mathematics teachers use pre- and post-assessments in every unit of instruction. They also make use of the data generated by Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing at the ninth, tenth, or eleventh grade levels. Created by the Northwest Evaluation Association, MAP is a summative criterion-referenced assessment of students' academic performance in core content areas of Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Science. Because of MAP testing, teachers in School A2 now have multiple years of achievement data to determine learning targets, academic strengths, and areas needing improvement.

Teacher A3 mentioned that there is not enough hard achievement data to measure teacher effectiveness, but that good teachers are willing to make instructional changes to create more accurate measures of student learning. Some school-wide data have the potential to indicate student quality, according to A3. For example, percentages of a teacher's students going off to college are a better measure of teacher quality than students' grades on an Advanced Placement exam. A3 praised School A's increased use of data on graduation rates, college entrance, and positive school-work experiences to measure success.

While there may be many reasons to de-emphasize student achievement test results in a school community that is serving an under-served student population, overall, the three teachers interviewed from School A did not oppose systemic effort to examine student learning through student achievement data. They commented

on the importance good formative and summative assessments designed by individual teachers, but they also believed that school-generated data could be used to measure teacher quality. The teachers appeared to promote department, grade-level, and school-wide examination of student content-area achievement. They supported MAP testing but did not mention the PSAT, SAT, or ACT-common summative assessments measuring student capabilities or skill acquisition for college entrance and/or success as potential measures of teacher quality.

School B (Private Large High SES). Teacher B1 expressed concern about using student perception surveys to measure teacher effectiveness and quality. Teacher effectiveness is complex, according to B1; it is probable that teachers will not know of their own effectiveness until they've "completed at least ten years of teaching." Teacher B2 commented that student perceptions of how well they've done in a specific course might be useful measures of teacher effectiveness. Assessment data might also demonstrate teacher quality, but only if data comes from multiple assessments, including regular tests and homework. B2 praised the school portal system that provided immediate feedback on the rate and level of student learning in the classroom, implying that the increased transparency of student achievement data might help in evaluating teacher quality. Teacher B3 spoke little about achievement data as a measure of teacher effectiveness, focusing instead on how students pinpoint quality teachers by a teacher's reputation and high standards.

In summary, a striking theme is the responses from all three teachers in School B was the emphasis on student perceptions of teacher quality. They offered different opinions on this measurement, but their focus on this issue suggested it is

an important concern at the school. In contrast, the teachers made little to no mention of the use of achievement data based on classroom formative or summative assessments to measure teacher quality. Teacher B2 vaguely mentioned an “overall” assessment of student work as a potential measure of teacher quality, but none of the teachers in School B discussed how student achievement outcomes are measured or how they might be used to measure teacher effectiveness. Nor did the teachers discuss how standardized tests such as the PSAT, SAT, or ACT might be used to evaluate teachers, a surprising omission given the high percentage of School B students who enroll annually in colleges and universities across the region and beyond.

There are many reasons why School B may not wish to publically share student achievement data, and it is not surprising that teachers representing School B did not acknowledge schoolwide student achievement results or reference how student achievement within a specific content area or grade level might be used to measure teacher quality.

School C (Public Large High SES). Teacher C1 emphasized that good language teachers use assessments to measure students’ proficiency in language development, but she did not mention whether assessment data should be used to evaluate teacher quality. She instead focused on how classroom assessment data provide helpful guides to designing lessons that prepare students for proficiency assessments such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) examinations. CI also spoke of the many barriers that prevent teachers from designing quality assessments

and giving effective feedback, including classrooms with forty-two students, and the teacher's difficulty in maintaining a balance between professional and personal life.

Teacher C2 argued about the danger of linking teacher quality to student outcomes and achievement data, especially "if you don't have a standard that you know the teachers are holding themselves to and are being held to." Even more problematic in using achievement to measure teacher effectiveness was the relationship between equity and student outcomes. The only way student achievement could accurately measure teacher quality, according to C2, is if all students had similar experiences and all teachers graded on the same scale with the same rubrics.

C2 cited another problem with using student achievement to measure teacher quality: grade inflation. Teachers often compromise their expectations out of fear that a lower student GPA in their classroom reflected poorly on them, C2 pointed out, making grades a less meaningful measure of student learning. Teacher C2 believed there is a culture within School C that promotes grade inflation, limits agreement on academic standards, and prevents cohesive decision-making regarding defined student outcomes, all patterns that make it difficult to use achievement data to measure teacher effectiveness.

Teacher C3 asked "how could you be a quality teacher and not be effective [at raising student achievement]?" For C3 the key question was not should but how: how can schools effectively measure student growth. Despite an obvious passion, C3 did not offer any examples of how a school might do this. She responded that the methods would be different depending upon the overall needs of the students

within a given school. For example, measurements in the affluent School C may look different than in a school serving a high poverty student population. “Do we have the tools we need...and skills we need to look at the nuances and subtleties? It seems to be highly correlated,” according to C3.

In summary, the teachers in School C represented a wide range of opinions on the possible links between teacher effectiveness at improving student achievement and teacher quality. Teacher C1 emphasized the factors that might impede a teacher, C2 spoke of the challenges of aligning standards and assessments in a school, and teacher C3 asked the fundamental question “how does one measure achievement and growth?” Perhaps this last question was key for all three teachers from School C. The school has experienced many successes, from a high percentage of their students attending colleges and universities to the many scholarships and other academic accolades that students receive. But the teachers wondered if these successes indicate teaching quality.

School D (Public Mid-Size Low SES). Teacher D1 spoke candidly that she had no idea whether she was effective or not in her first year of teaching. D1’s goal for the current year was to better align content area assessments in a more sequential manner each quarter, using standards as a guide for lesson design, re-teaching, and self-reflection on her teaching. By taking one piece at a time, providing more individual feedback to students, and using work samples or portfolios to measure student progress, D1 hoped to get more concrete data on student achievement and her own effectiveness.

Teacher D2 spoke extensively about using data analysis of STAR testing results coupled with specific skill analysis. These data would be used to create department goals and a variety of formative assessments to measure student progress over time. These data would show teachers' effectiveness at improving achievement. At the same time, D2 complained about the pushback within the school and district against teaching to standards and formative assessments. She cited how work on standards done by district teachers almost fifteen years ago has been scrapped, even though it could be valuable for creating lessons, and measure student learning and ultimately teacher effectiveness over time. D2 acknowledged some change is taking place in School D. Professional learning communities in School D are now required, in response to the increased diversity of the student population and the resultant need for change. Teacher D2 hoped this will lead to an improved understanding of assessment and the use of data to evaluate and improve teaching.

Teacher D3 spoke with clarity about understanding student and teacher success through achievement on identified student outcomes. D3 described how an effective world languages classroom included daily experiences in speaking, reading, writing, and listening accompanied by frequent assessments of proficiency. With student engagement at the center, teacher quality is best measured by students demonstrating proficiency in the language. When students are successful in language acquisition and proficiency, D3 pointed out, teachers are most effective.

In summary, teachers in School D reflected the deepest commitment to student academic progress as a primary indicator of teacher quality. Each teacher

shared a perspective reflecting her specific content areas, but all spoke of student acquisition of skills, knowledge, and proficiencies as evidence of teacher quality. For the teachers, the changing racial, ethnic, and social nature of the students in School D and the related learning challenges made the increased attention to student achievement especially important.

Teacher Effectiveness: Themes and Patterns Among Schools

The most interesting pattern in teacher responses related to this category was the overall lack of reference to student achievement data and how these data might measure teacher effectiveness. There was also little discussion of identifying and assessing student outcomes, either through summative or formative assessments in the classroom, or through large-scale measures. There was even less discussion about how student achievement data from these measurements could indicate teacher quality. Perhaps this issue was not clearly presented to interviewees. Or it could be that teachers have little interest in the current national conversation about accountability measures to generate comprehensive student achievement data by school, district, region, or state. Whatever the reason, only teachers in School D demonstrated an understanding or interest in developing standards and assessment systems that could be used to demonstrate student and teacher effectiveness.

The teachers in Schools A, B, and C focused on different issues when asked about using student achievement to reveal teacher quality. Many spoke about the impediments to designing and implementing effective assessments. Others raised questions about how schools and teachers could accurately measure achievement,

especially teacher achievement, while some raised issues of equity and fairness, professional learning communities, and personal-professional balance.

Overall, there were no important differences in the responses between private and public school teachers on the relationship between teacher quality and student achievement, but the socio-economic status of students in the schools seemed to have some influence on teacher responses. Much more than the teachers in Schools B and C, teachers representing Schools A and D, which served many students from low socio-economic backgrounds, spoke with passion and purpose about the importance of culturally responsive teaching, differentiated learning, and fair assessment of student outcomes. Teachers in both schools, and especially School A, were positive about reviewing the progress of individual students. At the same time, they recognized the difficulties in setting and achieving standards from diverse and often poor students. While the commitment to culturally responsive teaching was high, the specifics for improving student outcomes were few. Teachers in A and D also provided few specifics about how student achievement could be connected to the assessment of teachers.

Section 2: Measurement and Evaluation Systems for Teacher Quality

Table 2 illustrates the teacher quality measurements systems that were described by each school principal prior to interviewing each secondary teacher included in this study.

Table 2

School Teacher Quality Measurements for Schools A, B, C & D – 2015-2016

Category	School A	School B	School C	School D
Public/Private	Private (Catholic)	Private (Catholic)	Public	Public
Enrollment	500	1,200	1,700	1,400
Academic Distinctions	College/Work Ready Corporate Internship Program	College Preparatory/Advanced Placement (AP) Program	College Preparatory/International Baccalaureate Program	College Preparatory/Advanced Placement (AP) & AP Scholars Programs
Teacher Quality Measurement Systems	Danielson's Framework of Teaching; Revised Blooms Taxonomy; Antonetti and Garver research on student learning data.	Danielson's Framework of Teaching; Professional Learning Community implementation in 2015; Anticipated addition of student surveys in 2016-2017.	Danielson's Framework of Teaching model with approval between district and teacher collective bargaining unit; Informal use of student and parent feedback; PLC implementation at the department and interdepartmental levels; Alignment between school and district's Continuous Action Planning Model.	Danielson's Framework of Teaching model with approval between district and teacher collective bargaining unit; Noted emphasis on culturally responsive teaching strategies and equity per recent changes in school's student population shifts in diversity based upon race, ethnicity, learning and language needs and socio-economic status.
Teacher Quality Implementation and Communication Strategies	Shift to more frequent unannounced classroom visits in addition to formal visitations; Use of digital tools to provide immediate feedback to teachers. Scheduled 1:1 debrief meetings with every teacher t/o the year; School generated templates to create common vocabulary for teachers;	Comprehensive hiring process that involves dept. chair, administrator, faculty-at-large and the teaching of a lesson by all candidates; Use of digital tools to provide immediate feedback to teachers; Annual teacher self-reflection process prior to goal-setting for the following year; Comprehensive and developmental plan of teacher quality measurements that changes with teacher needs and/or teachers' experience in the school; Strong evidence of marketing and communication	Comprehensive hiring process within the guidelines of the district and with specific criteria that matches the school's mission and culture of academic rigor; Student achievement goal implementation per department collaboration; frequent use of external communication tools (Facebook, Flickr, e-newsletters, et al) to communicate/celebrate school and student successes; primary emphasis on teacher effectiveness and curricular alignment and teacher strategies	Primary emphasis on establishing improved communication with each teacher relating to the Danielson Framework specific to teaching and learning and culturally responsive teaching; Data collection and analysis relating to increased diverse student population, including academic and behavioral data (overall engagement in school – classroom, co-curricular and extra-curricular plus attendance, discipline, et al); Creation of school goals and teacher performance goals specific to

Emerging evidence of expanded communication strategies to celebrate school's growing success.	strategies to students, parents, stakeholders, general public along with the associated religious network regarding student and school success.	to support students in need.	equity and culturally responsive teaching.
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School A (Private Small Low SES): System for Measuring and

Evaluating Teacher Quality. An independent Catholic school with a unique work-study curriculum designed to serve its racially diverse and mostly low-income population, School A had no system for evaluating teachers for years. At the time of the interview, however, teachers were evaluated using a hybrid of two distinct models: Danielson's Framework of Teaching (2014) and the revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002).

Using the Danielson framework, teachers selected one of the four Danielson domains (2013)—planning and preparation; classroom environment; instruction; and professional responsibilities—as a primary area of emphasis, but administrators also designate an area of focus, which currently is planning and preparation. According to the principal,

In the first semester, I'll have one session with each teacher at the regular scheduled debrief time on planning within Domain 1 [planning and preparation]: tell me about how you do a lesson or how you plan a unit. Walk me through the process.

Additionally, the principal shared that the specific administrative goal was for teachers to align all curricular materials with identified academic goals for each

content area. Working in teams, teachers are then able to analyze student achievement data related to specific goals and to generate interventions for student not reaching the goals. The evaluation framework also expected teachers to include activities related to the six revised Bloom's Taxonomy levels.

School A used a cycle of teacher multiple observations with little advanced teacher notice (Marshall, 2013). The ideal was to observe each teacher every two weeks, with a total of 18 observations over a 36-week cycle, but this occurred only for struggling teachers. The average teacher experienced two to three observations each quarter, totaling between eight and twelve per year. After a teacher observation, data was entered in a software program that contains templates aligned with Danielson's domains. Data was also integrated into a "level of thought" chart that identified teacher behaviors related to the six revised Bloom's Taxonomy levels. A separate "note on student performance" form was also used, based on six observable student behaviors: remember; understand; apply; analyze; evaluate; and create. The form included questions relating to observable student actions in the classroom: what students are doing and why? what evidence shows student engagement? how do students demonstrate comprehension and mastery? how do students engage in higher order thinking including analysis, evaluation, and creativity? how do students document and manage performance? how do students reflect on their performance and create a plan for improvement?

The principal acknowledged that a great deal of additional work with teachers needed to be done so that teachers share a common set of "look-fur's" and a

common vocabulary for describing student academic behaviors. According to the principal,

It is difficult for teachers to know how to define a benchmark and not merely a description of an activity in class. When I am observing a teacher, I want to be able to state the level of question or a level of work. We're hoping that these discussions will really help teachers be more precise in their use of questioning strategies and that questioning is a core part of instruction.

The principal of School A was optimistic that teachers will develop a common vocabulary and a core set of teaching practices over time.

School A (Private Small Low SES): Teacher Perceptions of the Evaluation and Measurement System. In general, teachers in School A supported the new evaluation model. Teacher A1 appreciated the emphasis on student learning in department meetings and enjoyed the professional development sessions focusing on curriculum development. She wanted observations to occur more often, however. Teacher A2 liked the system but complained that teacher evaluation was a “moving target,” with a different focus each year. These changes and teacher turnover has made the assessment of teacher quality very difficult, according to A2, since each teacher functions autonomously, approaching the content as she wants. Teacher A3 enjoyed the department conversations about student achievement. “Even at [the AP level] there is a bit of level one and level two work because they [students] don't know anything and they need to remember,” according to A3. “All of those things are changing with discussion in debriefs. And it's much less about what I'm doing and much more about the students.” D3 also mentioned assessment problems

created by teacher turnover, intimating that a teacher's longevity might be the most visible sign of teacher quality. A3 also believed that given the unique student population at School A, indices of success for School A such as graduation rates and college enrollment had a special value, and the small size of the school gave special credibility to anecdotal stories of success.

School B (Private Large High SES): System for Measuring and Evaluating Teacher Quality. The principal at School B believed that the school's teacher evaluation system began with hiring. Specifically, School B looked for teachers with a deep understanding of the subject matter, the ability to communicate subject matter in classroom, a value set consistent with the school's religious mission, which emphasized intellectual competence, the capacity to love, openness to growth, the ability to be religious, and a commitment to doing justice in the world.

Job finalists were invited to teach a full lesson as a part of the interview process, and along with this performance, and the search committee-comprised of the department chair, a faculty member from another department, and an administrator-carefully analyzed the candidate's background, content-area and teacher preparation, and understanding of the school mission.

Once hired, teachers at School B were evaluated using a combination of Danielson's Framework of Teaching (2007) and a specific religious-based pedagogy created at the national level for classroom use. Administrators and department chairs observed teachers' multiple times annually during their first three to four years and veterans less frequently. Areas of emphasis for teachers at this level included preparation, organizational ability, and on-task behavior by students, and

according to the principal, evaluators looked as much at what the students are doing as what the teacher is doing. After each observation, evaluators wrote a review, which teachers read and approved before it was formalized. Additionally, School B examined elements of teachers' professional practice in the spiritual and service realms of the school, including campus ministry, co-curricular activities, and committee membership.

School B also had a "teaching companions program" where peers visit one another's classrooms. This program used professional learning communities (PLCs) where teachers within content areas visited one another's classrooms and determine departmental goals based upon a peer coaching model. According to the principal,

We want to focus on how can we add value to those high value teachers in support of what they are doing so well. It's been good...asking teachers to think in a whole new way...in fact, sometimes our younger teachers, while less experienced, have much more facility with the technology than the more established veteran teachers, so they can learn from each other.

Each year, teachers also self-evaluated their performance and set performance goals for the following year, using data points that included a religious-affiliated educator profile. School B explored the possibility of a student perception survey of existing faculty, with student responses sent directly to the administrative team rather than teachers first. There was some angst among teachers, administrators, and department chairs, and the faculty members have worked to reach consensus.

School B (Private Large High SES): Teacher Perceptions of the Evaluation and Measurement System. Teacher B1 acknowledged the usefulness

of classroom observations, but she also wondered about validity since students act differently when another adult is in the room. “I don’t know if it’s a very accurate portrayal of my teaching ability when the administrators come in,” according to B1. “It’s pretty bureaucratic and formulaic.” Still, B1 welcomed guidance and support from both peers and administrators. B1 also questioned whether the evaluation system can change the school culture. It might have an impact on individuals teaching in the school, she mused, but “you’re not going to change an institution.

Teacher B2 confirmed that she was observed annually by either the principal, VP or department chair, receiving a review identifying strengths and areas for improvement. But an annual award recognizing two faculty members for outstanding teaching and commitment to the school might be even more effective in communicating the school’s religiously inspired vision of a quality teacher, according to B2.

Teacher B3 saw the evaluation system as rigorous and effective, citing several examples of teachers who have been placed on a plan of assistance. In one case, the teacher received a great deal of support and training but “it didn’t work out.” A member of a committee working to revise the teacher evaluation process, B3 appreciated the chance to work with teachers and, without the constraints that might be in a public school, to support them in becoming better educators, and better people.

In summary, School B teachers were generally supportive of the evaluation system, although their understanding of the system varied with experience level. There is some concern about student evaluations of teachers, but teachers seemed to

agree on the value of administrator and peer observations. They also appreciated the presence of a religious value system in the evaluation process.

School C (Public Large High SES): The System for Measuring and Evaluating Teacher Quality. The principal of School C, a public school serving high SES students, believed strongly that teacher quality measurement should always begin with the hiring process. A fan of the Finnish educational model, the principal argued that the practice of hiring well enables schools to help teachers “be the great people they already are and grow even further.” Quality candidates, she stated, can emerge from a variety of unique pathways in life. The principal stated:

Teachers can have different paths-go to an Ivy League school, serve as a Peace Corp volunteer, immigrate from Cuba - they’ve been tested, they’ve worked hard, they have the perseverance, and they have the actual concepts, skills and capacities to grow as life-long learners. Teachers also must have a heart for kids...they need to be able to build those relationships. They’ve been camp counselors, learned other languages, they’ve demonstrated a keen interest culturally and linguistically. All these are signs we look for before they (teachers) are even hired.

As a public school, School C implemented teacher quality measurements approved at the state level of education and consistent with the district and teachers’ collective bargaining agreement. Specifically, the State’s 2014 waiver from *No Child Left Behind* required districts to implement a new teacher quality measurement system that, in part, utilized student achievement data. The district, in collaboration with the

teachers' bargaining unit, chose to use Danielson's Framework of Teaching as a basis for evaluation.

The leadership team at School C worked diligently to calibrate their observations based on the Danielson framework. Teachers set S.M.A.R.T (Sustainable, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Research-Based, and Time-bound) student growth goals based on observable achievement data and an annual professional growth goal. In addition to regular administrator observations, the school also emphasized peer collaboration and feedback. Because every classroom was used by at least three teachers daily in overcrowded School C, teachers regularly observed other teachers simply because there was no other place for their preparation period. School C consciously clustered teachers of similar courses together and, in some cases, departments sought ways to mentor teachers who needed extra assistance or support. School C also implemented professional learning communities, with teachers given eight hours per month to collaborate and to integrate their work within school's continuous action plan (CAP). Specific School C goals included school climate, equity, teacher effectiveness, and alignment of instruction and assessment with IB and AVID strategies.

Parents and students also became part of the unofficial evaluation process at School C. And despite some initial resistance to the new measurement system, teachers came to expect quality conversations about what was happening in their classrooms. Teachers accepted that students and parents possess a common language for communicating their needs. Staff, students, parents and administrators

communicated via Facebook and newsletters to celebrate the school's many successes.

School C (Public Large High SES): Teacher Perceptions of the Evaluation and Measurement System. Teacher C1 commented that the evaluation system would work more effectively if those teaching the same class would agree on common student outcomes and use the same summative assessment. This would respect academic freedom, since the teacher would be able to teach toward the outcomes and assessments as he or she sees fit. Despite the comprehensive school teacher evaluation system, C1 believed, based largely on student comments, that some inferior teachers “may be slipping through the cracks.”

Teacher C2 also mentioned the informal word of mouth culture of teacher evaluation in School C, a system based primarily on student perceptions. Unfortunately, according to C2, teachers in the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum or other accelerated classes are viewed as the best. “Teachers who don't teach advanced courses, they'll be perceived as, Oh, they're so nice!” according to C2, as opposed to IB, where “the teacher is brilliant or the teacher changed the way I think.” Websites such as Rate-My-Teacher also concerned C2. For her, the administrators' use of observations and student achievement data are more valid measurements of teacher quality. She also supported the District's efforts to maintain teacher quality through licensure and professional development.

Teacher C3 expressed disappointment in the new teacher evaluation system, especially its lack of multiple evaluation criteria, analysis of professional development pursuits, and professional goal-setting. C3 also questioned the value of

the school's teacher quality measurement system, citing examples the difficulty of removing low quality teachers, abetted by union protections. C3 also argued that effective teacher measurements require a level of competence that many administrators lack. Evaluation of teachers should also include student, parent, and colleague feedback to be meaningful.

In summary, the teachers in School C expressed many dissatisfactions with the school's teacher evaluation culture and system. C1 suspected that inferior teachers might fall through the cracks. C2 questioned the school culture for placing more value on IB teachers. And teacher C3 yearned for a more multi-faceted system of teacher quality measurement. These concerns contrasted with the administration's view of the teacher evaluation system, which according to the principal, was collaborative, rich with multiple criteria, and inclusive. It is also possible, based on the teacher's comments, that the formal evaluation system was overshadowed by the informal culture of evaluation at the school, a system that rewarded some teachers while denigrating others.

School D (Public Mid-Size Low SES): The System for Measuring and Evaluating Teacher Quality. Like School C, School D was mandated to use a measurement system of teacher quality approved by the State law, district policy, and teachers' collective bargaining unit. But unlike C, D had recently shifted from a mostly middle class school to a school with diverse student population, including, many students of color, from low socio-economic backgrounds, and with learning needs. According to the principal, a set of effective teacher quality measures was of paramount importance in serving the student population, and she believed that a

teacher quality measurement system based on Danielson's Framework of Teaching and incorporating a culturally responsive, equity focused lens achieved this goal. The system emphasized student learning goals and the implementation of instructional strategies based on Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). Perhaps most importantly, it also emphasized equity and culturally responsive teaching practices. Specifically, School D engaged in conversations with teachers and staff about how their school need to change to better meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. This included an emphasis on generating observable classroom data that looks at all aspects of student performance.

The new evaluation system was "a long time coming and a great improvement from what we've had in the past," the principal claimed. The system allowed school personnel to look at teacher effectiveness with clear student learning and teacher performance benchmarks, using a rubric that measures where a given teacher is performing. This system, according to the principal,

...has changed the paradigm of conversation. When the school now talks about teacher effectiveness and how well a teacher is doing, we are calibrating on the same framework to make sure that we are talking about observable behaviors only while taking out our bias. We're really doing some in-depth conversation and how teachers are demonstrating or not demonstrating new measurements of teacher quality within Danielson's framework of teaching.

The principal also explained that teachers interpreted the former system as a reflection of a teacher's worthiness, not as a tool for professional growth. The new system also provided a common language for providing strategic feedback. Aided

by thirty-two hours of calibration tapes for school administrators, the new evaluation system was much more consistent and clearer than in the past. There have been growing pains, with some teachers yearning for the ‘good old days’ at School D. But the principal believed the general attitudes were positive:

Overall, there’s a different feel—it’s more collegial, it is more conversational. And it is really exciting to be talking about instruction at such a deep level versus the old method of identifying a cursory level of performance (needs improvement, meets the standard or commendable) that no one understood. It has been a learning curve for us as administrators to provide authentic feedback.

School D (Public Mid-Size Low SES): Teacher Perceptions of the Evaluation and Measurement System. Overall, the teachers interviewed in School D acknowledged the need for culturally responsive teaching and a new way of thinking about teacher evaluation. They recognized resistance by some teachers, especially veterans who nostalgically looked back at how the school used to be. However, they saw the overall attitude is hopeful.

Teacher D1 praised the new emphasis on culturally responsive teaching and the district’s efforts to recruit a quality teacher population that “reflected the student population that we serve.” D1 was involved in the school’s Care and Equity teams and collaborated on a course proposal entitled *Courageous Conversations*. Teacher D1 believed these actions reflected quality teaching and should be considered, along with classroom data, as evidence of effective teaching. Teacher D2 considered classroom organization, student relationships, content knowledge, self-reflection,

and relevance as critical characteristics of a quality teacher. Teacher D3 emphasized a teacher's ability to create authentic relationships with students and to move students towards proficiency in World Languages as critical measures of teacher quality.

Conclusion

The analysis of administrator and teacher comments presented in this chapter show several key findings reflecting the observations and beliefs of twelve teachers representing public and private schools in four schools in a large metropolitan area in the Pacific Northwest. Included are the following findings on teacher perceptions of teacher quality: Teachers in this study, regardless of the type of school or the profile of the students they serve, generally agreed that the formation of a strong teacher-student relationship is a fundamental characteristic of quality teaching. All teachers in this study emphasized the importance of teacher content mastery and content relevance. Teachers did not typically discuss content standards or provide specific details on pedagogical practices related to quality teaching. Teachers generally did not view teacher licensure or preparation by approved teacher education programs as significant indicators of teacher quality. Teachers interviewed in this study did not frequently relate teacher quality to student achievement. Public and private school teachers discussed teacher quality in similar ways. The socio-economic status of students in a school influenced how teachers in that school viewed teacher quality. And the perceptions of teacher quality expressed by teachers did not closely resemble the ways in which teacher quality was measured in their respective schools.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter begins with a summary of chapters one through four to clarify the purpose of the study, the research literature, the methodology, and the findings based upon research questions that have examined perspectives of teacher quality from twelve secondary teachers in four selected public and private schools. The chapter will then discuss conclusions based on the study findings, followed by a discussion of the study's limitations, an analysis of practical applications, and possible next steps for future research. The chapter will conclude with future recommendations about teacher quality based on the perceptions of quality teachers revealed in this study.

Summary of the Qualitative Study

This qualitative study was created in response to perceived changes in the definition of teacher quality over a forty-year educational career. Beginning a twelve-year stint as a secondary teacher in 1975, followed by nearly three decades as a secondary school administrator, the author has observed significant changes in the perceived role of teachers in public and private schools and in conceptions of what it means to be a school of excellence. There have also been decades of research studying the effectiveness of schools, the creation of schools of excellence, both in the public and private domain. The research of Gottlieb (2015) and Hattie and Marsh (1996) emphasized the overall importance of studying why teacher quality is important, and Strong (2011) identified four characteristics of teacher quality emphasized in the research: professional qualifications, personal attributes,

pedagogical skills and practices, and teacher effectiveness at improving student performance. These four characteristics provided a theoretical framework for this study, and the existing literature was reviewed to determine the key research ideas related to each of these characteristics.

Goffman (1959), Fawkes (2015), Jones and Nisbett (1969), Monson and Snyder (1977), Wenger (1998), and Hargraeves and Fullan (2012) examined the critical importance of personal identity in teacher quality, while Witty (1950), Cruickshank (1986), Stronge (2007), and Noddings (2014) identified specific personal attributes that quality teachers possess. Danielson (2013) provided a meta-analysis of research on the pedagogical practices of effective teachers, resulting in a framework of teaching used by many states and districts for instructional supervision and evaluation. Additionally, Marzano (2003), Marshall (2006), and Hattie (1996) explored the tight coupling of research-based standards and pedagogical practices to quality teaching and student achievement gains. Darling-Hammond and Young (2002), DeAngelis and Presley (2011), and Eckert (2012) all emphasized the importance of teacher licensure, site-based skill development in under-graduate and graduate teacher preparation programs. Finally, Strong (2011) described successful teaching as measured by the acquisition of identified student outcomes. Creemers and Kyriakides (2008), and Haycock and Hanushek (2010) also pointed to quality measures related to student achievement. Goe (2007), on the other hand, encouraged caution in using student achievement to identify high-quality teachers because too many variables exist beyond a teacher's control.

Guided by Strong's (2011) categories of research on highly qualified teachers, this study focused on identifying perceptions of teacher quality that exist in selected public and private schools. More specifically, the study explored the following questions:

1. How do secondary teachers perceive teacher quality?
2. How do the perceptions of teacher quality in selected Catholic (private) secondary schools compare to those in selected public secondary schools?
3. How do perceptions of teacher quality compare to secondary schools with different socio-economic demographics?
4. How do administrators measure teacher quality in selected secondary schools?
What measurements does each selected school use? How are the measurements implemented? How is feedback to teachers in selected schools communicated?
5. Do teacher perceptions of teacher quality link to existing internal and external measures of teacher quality in each selected school?

The methodology implemented in this research study included the selection of four schools—two private (Catholic) and two public—that represented a diversity of opportunity and vision of education located in a large metropolitan city on the west coast of the United States. Specific profiles for each school are included in Chapter Three. Three teachers were chosen per school, and they participated in a one-hour face to face interview with the author, discussing the questions listed above. Additionally, the principal of each school met with the author and answered a series of questions related to how teacher quality is measured in their respective schools.

Discussion of Research Findings

The findings from this qualitative study present both elements of confirmation and surprise when compared to the previous research on quality teaching. Below is a set of specific study conclusions followed by a discussion.

Finding One: Teachers in this study, regardless of the type of school or the profile of the students they serve, generally agreed that the formation of a strong teacher-student relationship is a fundamental characteristic of quality teaching.

This finding coincides with the emphasis on personal identity and teacher found in the research of Goffman (1959), Fawkes (2015), Jones and Nisbett (1969), Monson and Snyder (1977), Wenger (1998), and Hargraeves and Fullan (2012). More specifically, it also supports the research of Witty (1950), Cruickshank (1986), Stronge (2008), Noblits and Noddings (2012) on the importance of a caring nature in teacher-student relationships.

Finding Two: All teachers in this study emphasized the importance of teacher content mastery and content relevance.

There was a generalized understanding of Danielson's framework of teaching in all four schools. The framework was incorporated into the school's supervision evaluation systems, and teachers confirmed the importance of this element of good teaching. This is what one would expect, given the strong research emphasis on content mastery.

Finding Three: Teachers did not typically discuss content standards or provide specific details on pedagogical practices related to quality teaching.

While there was a consensus that core content knowledge is an important factor, there is little of evidence about how teachers view that content knowledge. Nor did teachers provide many details on what good instruction looks like or specific indicators of differentiation, beyond an emphasis on relating well with students. This is surprising, since administrators in each of the four schools emphasized that teachers had been informed of standards, best practices, and other content and instructional *look fors* specific to their designated content areas. The existing research also emphasized the importance of content standards and their alignment to best practices. An exception to the pattern found in the four schools was teacher D2, who spoke fondly and at length about a previous school assignment where teachers understood the importance of teaching to standards through relevant instructional practices and targeted assessments impacting student academic growth. Teacher D2 expressed surprise that teachers in her department and school were resistant to teaching to standards and related best practices, yet she was hopeful that teachers in School D would see the benefits over time

Finding Four: Teachers generally did not view teacher licensure or preparation by approved teacher education programs as significant indicators of teacher quality.

Despite the emphasis by Darling-Hammond (2000) on the positive affect of teacher preparation programs and teacher licensure on teacher quality, the teachers interviewed in this study paid little attention to these factors when

describing teacher quality. In contrast, they frequently cited the importance of relevant professional development programs, which they believed could significantly improve a teacher's performance in the classroom.

Finding Five: Teachers interviewed in the study did not frequently relate teacher quality to student achievement.

The teachers rarely discussed how formative or summative assessments could be used to measure student achievement or inform instruction. Likewise, teachers rarely provided information on how student achievement might be analyzed—either individually or in collaborative teacher teams—to determine the effectiveness of instruction. This finding is surprising given the emphasis in existing research on the assessment of student achievement. Perhaps teachers did not have the skills needed to use student assessment data to inform decision-making or practice. Or they may have had those skills, but considered this assessment of student achievement less important to quality teaching than caring relationships and content knowledge.

Finding Six: Public and private school teachers discussed teacher quality in similar ways.

Formation of the whole child was the centerpiece of the mission and vision of each of two private (Catholic) schools in the study. So, it is not surprising that teachers in these schools emphasized the holistic formation of their students based upon faith, religious principles and academic accomplishments. At the same time, public schools articulated a secular, but similar view of quality teaching based on caring and relationships. Private school teachers articulated their role as a teacher of

faith who must model their own beliefs within the specific charism of the religious order administering the school. Public school teachers described their role in shaping students who care for each other. Every teacher, public or private, expressed the importance of a teacher's commitment to students' formation as young adults—academically, socially, emotionally, and ethically. This commitment coincided with the strong emphasis on caring and other affective teacher qualities in the existing literature. However, few if any existing studies document how these qualities bridge the private-public divide.

Finding Seven: The socio-economic status of most students in a school influenced how teachers in that school viewed teacher quality.

The teachers in schools serving high poverty/high needs students often linked teacher quality to equitable practices and the pursuit of culturally responsive teaching strategies. Data obtained from teachers in Schools A and D indicated a much greater emphasis on the importance of culturally responsive teaching and a commitment to equity and inclusion in their respective schools. Teachers in both schools expressed a sincere commitment to reaching out to marginalized students and designing classroom environments that are culturally responsive to their students' needs social and academic needs. The research of Haycock and Hanushek (2010) wholeheartedly supports the importance of these characteristics. However, teachers in schools who serve mostly affluent/low needs student populations expressed these views less frequently, a trend that is not fully developed in the existing literature. Instead, teachers at high-SES schools emphasized indicators such as SAT scores, college enrollment, and scholarship awards.

Finding Eight: The perceptions of teacher quality expressed by teachers did not closely resemble the ways in which teacher quality was measured in their respective schools.

Administrators described developed teacher evaluation systems that they believed were clearly communicated to teachers and consistently implemented. But, the individual teachers interviewed typically had very different perceptions of these evaluation systems. This finding, evident in both private Catholic schools and public schools, was a surprise. The participating public schools had recently redesigned the teacher supervision and evaluation system throughout their district with district teachers and administrators collaborating to create a new system of teacher evaluation requiring teachers to develop annual student growth goals, elements of Danielson's framework for teacher evaluation, and culturally responsive teaching elements.

The district and its administrators enacted an elaborate system of communication and professional development for the new protocol to ensure teacher understanding and collaboration with administrators. In addition, existing research and state and national policy initiatives all pointed toward the changes embedded in the new evaluation system. Still, teachers showed little appreciation or awareness of the new system. Many agreed with key components such as culturally responsive teacher and Danielson's framework, but they saw little connection between their views on teacher quality and the District's evaluation system. Similarly, both participating private schools were in the process of changing their current teacher supervision and evaluation systems, with one of the two schools using an extensive

sub-committee structure to ensure that teacher voices were represented as these changes were being considered. Still, the teachers in these schools saw little connection between their own perceptions and the new evaluation systems.

In summary, all four schools were in various stages of implementation of new evaluation designed to measure teacher quality and to provide authentic feedback to teachers. Yet there was virtually no mention of any aspect of these evaluation systems in the teacher interviews. The one exception was teacher C3, who commented that the *hype* surrounding the launch of the new system was disappointing and that it did not appear to be impacting classroom instruction.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study, including the author's administrative bias, possibly inadequate interview questions, and difficulties in applying the theoretical framework when coding interview data. Much of the author's educational career has been spent as a secondary school principal in public and private (Catholic) schools. Therefore, despite extensive efforts to communicate clearly and with an open mind when interviewing each of the twelve teacher participants in the study, the author felt more at ease when discussing measurements of teacher quality with administrators. The author was surprised by and had difficulty understanding several teacher participants who did not appear to have firsthand knowledge or understanding about ways to measure of teacher quality, particularly measurements based on student achievement. The author's disconnect with several teachers may have unconsciously impacted how they responded in the teacher interview.

In addition, the interview questions were designed to be open-ended, permitting teachers to interpret and answer the questions based upon their own experiences and perceptions. However, the responses, especially those relating to pedagogical skills and teacher effectiveness based on student performance, demonstrated a lack of conceptual understanding as to how pedagogical decision-making can be tied to standards or the assessments of student work. Likewise, there were very few teachers who shared any specific examples of pedagogical methods or assessments, and few teachers made direct reference to the relationship between quality teaching and widely-shared practices such as instructional coaching, teacher evaluation, student growth goals, or data driven decision-making. It is possible that the questions were not specific enough to elicit more detailed responses from the teacher candidates. It is also possible that teachers themselves chose not to address certain pedagogical strategies or teacher accountability policies because of personal antipathy toward these practices.

Finally, the author experienced challenges in coding the qualitative data. Information provided by teacher candidates often applied to more than one the characteristics identified in Strong's theoretical framework. Interviewees often provided global responses that did not directly address a Strong category, and their responses oftentimes fit in many or all categories, making the coding of their responses difficult.

Corrections to these limitations might have included more specific questions to elicit more in-depth answers from teacher candidates that could clearly identify knowledge, understanding and implementation of collaborative experiences specific

to Strong's research categories. Additionally, a survey conducted to a wider base of teacher candidates in each of the four participating schools could also analyze teachers' collective knowledge, understanding and implementation of best practices reflecting all four research categories of teacher quality, with special attention placed in teacher effectiveness based on student performance. Further exploration of teachers' beliefs, attitudes and practices could also shed a light on each school's culture of learning and overall school climate.

While the responses provided by the teacher participants representing public and private schools shines a light on elements of each teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning, this research study might have benefitted from a more holistic approach that explored teacher perceptions of teacher quality in each school. Future research could examine each of the four schools on their own merits to determine a deeper understanding of teacher quality within the context of each school community.

Implications for Future Research

There are several key areas worthy of future research pertaining to the overall topic of teacher perceptions of teacher quality. Strong (2011) defined quality teaching as the combination of both good teaching and successful teaching. This study suggested that most teachers thought extensively, though vaguely, about good teaching, but less about successful teaching. Based upon the high percentage of generalized responses from teachers in this study in all of Strong's categories, one possible area for further research is the exploration of teachers' knowledge, ability, and skills to merge the attributes of good teaching—representing a teacher's abilities

to implement worthy tasks that are engaging and rigorous for students and successful teaching—through documented student achievement gains as determined through formative and summative assessments, projects and other indicators of authentic assessment directly linked to curricular standards.

Another implication for further study may be linked to how teachers internalize elements of quality teaching in ways that are fundamentally different from standardized measures of teacher quality based upon a specific teacher supervision and evaluation system, student achievement data, and other external measures of quality teaching within a given school or district. In each of the four schools included in this study, there was a clear sense of pride and accomplishment expressed by teachers related to their own experiences with students in the classroom along with school successes that were outward signs of each school's accomplishments. However, the degree to which each teacher could discuss elements of teacher effectiveness through the lens of curricular standards, pedagogical decision-making and assessment of student outcomes suggested that the language of teaching may, in fact, be different than the language of administrators and other educational leaders.

Culturally responsive teaching and cultural competence at the secondary level in public and private schools is also another key area for future research. Most teachers representing Schools A and D serving students with greater diversity, higher needs, and lower socio-economic areas spoke freely of the importance of these critical skills, but teachers representing higher socio-economic with little or no

diversity did not voluntarily engage in any conversation on either of these two important areas.

Conclusion

Without question, the twelve teacher participants in this study were dedicated educators who expressed genuine care for their students and a commitment to their success and a pride in the school that they represented. Additionally, these teachers expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in a research study about teaching from a teacher's perspective. Overall, these teachers spoke with passion about teaching and the students they serve, and many teachers responded to interview questions literally as the bell was ringing and students were busily entering their classrooms. Despite some elements of surprise in the findings, all teachers participating in this study were dedicated to teaching and eagerly expressed their pursuit of learning to be a better teacher for the students they serve.

In a similar way, all four principals in this study were eager to talk about the work they were doing related to school improvement through teacher evaluation, professional learning communities, and more targeted opportunities for professional development. Each principal believed that specific changes in teacher quality measurements would boost student achievement gains and, in some cases, significantly close the achievement gap for specific groups of students in need of additional supports. As a group, they expressed an unwavering commitment to teaching and learning and the belief that quality teaching is the most critical factor in the lives of students.

Whether representing a private or public school in a high poverty or low poverty environment, the beliefs that teachers expressed in this qualitative research study reflected the recognition of strong teacher-student relationships, the significance of teachers as mentors, facilitators and caring adults, the importance of content knowledge and expertise, and an awareness of the needs of each individual student. These findings provide hope and a strong foundation to build upon.

They also show that concepts of quality teaching have changed over time. While many questions remain as to why this has happened, perhaps the most compelling answer is that the needs of our students have changed dramatically. A greater awareness of the achievement and opportunity gaps and their significance for students, especially those marginalized by race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, language and learning needs, gender, and sexual orientation. Educators—teachers and administrators alike—are increasingly taking responsibility for ensuring that our vision of quality teaching serves the needs of every child in every school, public or private.

In closing, this study pointed to the need to learn from one another and to combine our mutual strengths. In the forward to the book *The Collaborative Teacher*, written by Erkens et al. (2008), DuFour wrote:

We must acknowledge that no one person can or should be solely responsible for bringing about high levels of learning and tending to the diverse needs of each student...for to prepare students for success in the 21st Century, we must develop the capacity of every teacher to become members of a growing network of shared expertise.” (Erkens et al., 2008, p. vii)

Perhaps our next important steps as educators is to determine how the capacity of teachers and schools can be impacted by shared expertise. Our next generation of students and their ultimate success may lie in our ability to construct a composite vision and reality of quality teaching.

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Appendix A1: Initial Contact Email to School Principal or Designee

Dear (Name of School Administrator)

Greetings!

Please accept my gratitude for your willingness, on behalf of your school, to participate in my qualitative dissertation research exploring the topic of teacher perceptions of teacher quality. This research study topic has been developed throughout doctoral coursework at the University of Portland, and because of my own experiences as a classroom teacher and 9-12 school and district administrator throughout my career.

Specifically, this qualitative research study will explore teachers' perceptions of teacher quality. While we know that teacher quality is important and has been identified as the single most important factor in student achievement, we also know that there are multiple definitions of teacher quality that currently exist in the literature. What we've also discovered is that research relating to the teacher perception of teacher quality is limited. It is for these reasons that I am pursuing this research study.

As the first step of this research study, I'd like to schedule a meeting to discuss the teacher quality measurements currently being used at your school (including copies of anything that you can share), how these measurements are being implemented and shared with teachers within your school, and the nomination process to determine a potential list of teachers in your school who may wish to participate in this study.

Our meeting should take approximately forty-five minutes, conducted at a time and location of your convenience. My preference is that we meet at your school site. However, knowing that your time during the school day is very valuable, Google Hangout or Skype may also be considered.

There are no known risks to participating in this research for you, your school and the participating teachers. Benefits include the opportunity to think deeply about your own professional practice relating to measurements of teacher quality along with confidential access to qualitative data from your school site.

Thank you for your commitment to participate in this important research study on teacher perceptions of teacher quality. I will be calling you soon to schedule our appointment.

(Salutation and Signature)

Appendix A2: Administrative Interview Questions

- 1) What measurements of teacher quality are used/implemented at your school/district?
- 2) How are these teacher quality measures implemented at your school/district?
- 3) How is the information obtained from these measurements of teacher quality communicated with teachers?
- 4) Is there anything else you think I should know about measurements of teacher quality within your school/district?

PLEASE NOTE: Probes will be used to further explore administrator responses as needed.

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During the administrator interview, I will also discuss the teacher nomination process with the principal or designee at each school. A total of three teachers will be invited to participate from each school. We will seek representation according to experience as follows: One teacher with less than seven years of total teaching experience; one teachers between 7 and 20 years of experience; and one teacher with more than 20 years' experience overall.

PLEASE NOTE: If a nominated teacher declines to participate, additional nominees will be identified at each school according to the categories above. A letter of invitation will be sent to an alternate nominee only if a teacher declines to participate.

Appendix B1: Initial Contact Email to Nominated Teachers

Dear (Name of nominated participant)

Greetings!

I am writing to invite you to consider participating in my qualitative dissertation research exploring the topic of teacher perceptions of teacher quality. This research study topic has been developed throughout doctoral coursework at the University of Portland, and because my own experiences as a classroom teacher and 9-12 school and district administrator throughout my career.

Specifically, this research will explore teachers' perceptions of teacher quality. While we know that teacher quality is important and has been identified as the single most important factor in student achievement, we also know that there are multiple definitions of teacher quality that currently exist in the literature. What we've also discovered is that research relating to the teacher perception of teacher quality is limited. It is for these reasons that I am pursuing this research study.

I hope that you will consider participating. The study will include a 1:1 interview with you, focusing on your perceptions of teacher quality. The interview will be conducted at a time and location of your convenience. My preference is that our interviews take place at your school site. However, I know that your time during the school day is very valuable. In any case when you may not be available during the school day, Google Hangout or Skype may also be considered. Our initial interview will last forty-five minutes. Once the data is collected, transcribed and analyzed, a second thirty-minute interview may be scheduled.

There are no known risks to participating in this research. Benefits include the opportunity to think deeply about your own professional practice and your beliefs and perceptions about teacher quality.

If your interest relating to this research topic is as deep as mine, I will love the opportunity to work with you. Please open the attached document to complete a short survey indicating your interest in participating and I will contact you soon.

Thank you for considering your participation in this important research opportunity.

(Salutation and Signature)

Appendix B2: Sample Teacher Interview Questions

- 1) How would you define teacher quality? A teacher is a quality teacher when he/she...
- 2) How is teacher quality linked to teacher qualifications?
- 3) How is teacher quality linked to personal attributes?
- 4) How is teacher quality linked to pedagogical skills and practices?
- 5) How is teacher quality linked to teacher effectiveness?
- 6) Please describe someone in your school whom you consider a quality teacher. What qualifications, attributes, skills and practices, and measures of effectiveness make them a quality teacher in your eyes?
- 7) How does your school/district measure teacher quality? Do you think that these measures are accurate portrayals of teacher quality from your perspective?
- 8) Is there anything else you think I should know?

PLEASE NOTE: Probes will be used to further explore teacher responses as needed.

Appendix C: Participant Survey

Thank you for your interest in the research study about teacher perceptions of teacher quality. This interest survey will help me confirm that you are interested in participating in this study, and to know when it is best to reach you. I will not use the information from the survey unless you give your full consent to participate prior to the time of our first interview.

1. Name:
2. School/School District:
3. Please list the official title of your position:
4. Are you currently employed full-time as a classroom teacher? Yes, No
If No above, what other responsibilities do you have at this school?

5. Total years of experience at your current school:
6. Total years of teaching experience:
7. Best location to conduct an interview:
8. Best time to reach you:
9. Best method to reach you:
10. Preferred phone number for research related contact:
11. Preferred email for research related contact:
12. Do you have a question(s) concerning this research study?

If yes, please write your question(s) below:

Appendix D: Teacher Consent Form

The purpose of this document is to provide you with information to help you decide if you will participate in this dissertation research.

The purpose of this dissertation research is to analyze teachers' perceptions of teacher quality. If you consent to participate, you will: a. Participate in an initial forty-five minute interview on your perceptions of teacher quality; and b. Participate in a possible second interview (approximately thirty minutes) focused on a second set of related questions pertaining to teacher perceptions of teacher quality.

Interviews will be conducted 1:1 in person at your school (if possible) or via Google Hangout or Skype—at a time and location of your preference.

Interviews will be recorded so that I can document your responses accurately. Your anonymity will be maintained by pseudonyms when disseminating any findings, including the final dissertation, and resultant publications and presentations. The recordings will be kept private under a password secured computer and stored according to the Institutional Review Board policies at the University of Portland.

There are no known risks to participating in this research. Benefits include the opportunity to think deeply about your own professional journey and your beliefs and perceptions about teacher quality.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact my advisor, Dr. Richard Christen, christen@up.edu, 503-943-7390. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the Internal

Review Board (IRB) at the University of Portland, Portland, OR

(IRB@up.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this dissertation research.

Printed name _____

Signature _____

Date _____